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BABY'S FIRST CHRISTMAS.—DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.





# The THAWING of JOEL S.

By ADA MARIE PECK.

"THERE STOOD BEFORE HIM A SLENDER FIGURE IN THE GRAY DRESS HE REMEMBERED SO WELL."

NOT that Joel Stormonth had always been a human icicle—instead, he began his career like other people. Just when the change began no one could tell. Nor by what strange chemical process the gold of the almighty dollar so chilled and congealed the life-current in his veins that at sixty-three he was wrinkled, grizzled, and bloodless, the blue of his eyes frozen to steel-like gray, his full, manly figure shrunken to the most spare proportions.

It was half-past six the night before Christmas, and he hated Christmas; he did not believe in it. It was not to him a sacred day, nor a day when there should be joy and feasting. Instead, it was, in his estimation, a humbug—a celebration of something which might or might not have happened. It was, in short, a day when people stopped working and spent their money; and when one half the world begged from the other half—for what else did gift-giving with one hand while holding out the other for something in return amount to? Not that any one ever gave him anything—he wouldn't thank them to—but at the same time he was being eternally solicited to head subscriptions and give presents. Why, that very noon, as he came back to his office from luncheon, a dozen grimy hands had been held out to him. "To-morrow is Christmas, you know," they all urged, like so many imbeciles. He was even jostled by a little girl who was so busy looking at the wonderful snow-scene in a shop window as she slowly walked past that she fetched up against him with a bounce.

"Do excuse me!" she said, prettily. "But I was so busy looking at the lovely things in the windows! To-morrow is Christmas, you know." She added it with a sad little inflection, as if she and Christmas had not much in common.

He noticed that the long, bright curls which hung below her coarse blue hood were about the size and color of gold eagles, and fell to computing, with a chuckle and an unctuous rubbing together of his hands, how much money they would represent if they really were solid gold and were laid together and sliced off just as thick as twenty-dollar pieces.

Then, that very night, just before the store closed, he heard William Newell, one of the under-clerks, ask at the desk for ten dollars—a whole week's wages. And when he said to him with a feeble attempt at jocularity: "Going to invest that as a nest-egg, I suppose," the fellow turned and looked at him with indignation in his fine gray eyes, and answered, sharply: "I am going to invest it in necessities, sir,"—then his voice softened; "and of course there are a few extras to buy, because to-morrow is Christmas, you know."

"Just like the rest of the fools," growled his employer, as he watched, rather enviously, the straight, handsome figure as the clerk left the room.

Soon the great wholesale house was closed, and Joel Stormonth, secure against all intruders, prepared to give himself a "Christmas-box," as he facetiously said. So he went to the ponderous safe and took out the great books and laid them on the desk before him; then he perched himself on the high stool, where he somehow had the look of a bird of prey about to pounce upon something, and bent one talon-like forefinger and ran it slowly down page after page. "A splendid profit this year," he said with a satisfied drawing in of his lips; "put that in your stocking to-night, Joel Stormonth," and he nodded until his head got to bobbing, and ran his long, sharp fingers through his grizzled hair as if he were plunging them in silver, and then rubbed them together as if he were lavishing them in gold.

think a moment of his vast possessions. It could not have rested there a second when a pair of thin, white hands were outstretched toward him.

"Who the deuce is begging this time?" he questioned with acerbity.

"I, your mother," replied a low, sad voice. And there stood before him a slender figure in the gray dress he remembered so well.

"I, too, want a Christmas gift. Can you give me the fulfillment of the bright dreams of your youth—the achievement of the pure ambitions and noble aspirations of your early manhood?" she asked, sorrowfully.

"That, I cannot do"—and for the first time it dawned upon him that there was something which gold could not buy. "But I can give you money," he said, eagerly. "Not much, perhaps," he added, cunningly, "but a little—enough for your present needs."

A look of indescribable grief spread over her features—she shook her head sorrowfully and faded away.

Then laughing little faces peered into his, and chubby hands were held out, with tiny hollowed palms like pink-tinted seashells. He had always regarded children as a nuisance; they existed that there might occasionally one grow up into a great rich man like Joel Stormonth, who could control a syndicate, crush a railroad, or wring a few pennies from a poor widow. He had never supposed they could be so beautiful, so winsome! But he only exclaimed, gruffly:

"Who are you and what do you want?" "We might have been yours," they answered; "and we want the joy and love we might have brought into your life—for to-morrow is Christmas, you know."

"Joy and love!" he echoed, with a sudden feeling of poverty. "I—I haven't any for you, but I can give you some bright, new pennies."

Then all the little children gathered around him with pitying looks.

"Not any joy or love, but just bright, new pennies! Poor, poor man!"

Now Joel Stormonth was not in the habit of being pitied, and it angered him, and he raised his head and reached forward to push them away. The arm upon which his head had lain was numb with the pressure, and he rubbed it vigorously, muttering:

"An absurd dream—megrimms, just megrimms. Liver out of order; must take pills;"—and then went on with his figuring. There were notes and mortgages in a small drawer of the desk, and one had been caught at the back in the tiny space behind another drawer, which it was necessary to open to prevent the paper from being torn. Evidently it had not been unlocked in a long time, for the key turned with difficulty and the drawer stuck, and when he drew it out it came with such a jerk that its contents were upset. A little box in it was quite upside down, and when he went to turn it over its contents rolled in different directions. He placed his hand at the edge of the desk to prevent them from falling to the floor and a broken penny fell into it, followed by a soft, golden curl. The curl seemed a thing of life, for it caught on his thumb and coiled around it. He shook it off on the great open book with a shudder, and it trembled as if some breeze from bygone years passed through it, and made him think of the way the wind used to blow back his sister Amy's curls as she came running up the flower-bordered walk of the old homestead.

"Now about those stocks and bonds"—and he jumped off the high stool with surprising alacrity, going briskly to the safe and bringing back a japanned box with a pleased, self-satisfied air. Then he figured again, finally holding the scrap of paper close to the light and looking at it gloatingly. "A grand sum total," he reflected; "put them in your other stocking, Joel." And again he nodded with joy—not genuine joy as other people feel, but a frigid semblance of it—and smiled in a cold, wintry fashion which curled up his thin lips as if they were autumn leaves and a nipping frost touched them.

He even dropped his head on one of the great open ledgers to

"I have nothing to give you for a keepsake, unless it be one of my curls," she said when he went out into the world to seek his fortune.

"You must be good to Amy when I am gone," pleaded his mother, a few years later.

Had he been good? How a remorseful conscience wrung his ice-bound heart! When she made an imprudent marriage, he repeated the homely saw, "that as she had made her bed so she must lie," and let her suffer the consequences. She died long ago in the far West; whether in misery and want he never knew; he had been too busy making and keeping money to even care.

"Mere trumpery!" he said, as he replaced the curl and broken penny in the box and picked up the bit of guitar-string and love-knot of faded ribbon—yet he picked them up carefully, and they made his old, time-hardened, world-worn heart beat as it had not done in years—for they brought back the memory of a fragment of song and a few bars of Spanish dance-music out on a side porch one moonlight night, and of a pair of eyes so softly, sweetly blue. The eyes were closed now. Over in the corner of the old church-yard Ruth rested from all care and worry and fret. In the summer time the rain fell gently, the sun shone brightly, and a great white rose-bush bore myriads of blossoms, and under it glossy myrtle was thickly interlaced. People said that Ruth died of a broken heart; that Joel Stormonth was so absorbed in money-getting that he never found time to appoint the wedding-day, and that, between wounded pride and affection, she faded like a fragile flower. The rumors made him uneasy for a while, then he returned with renewed zest to his wonted occupation.

Once he went to the little grave-yard in winter, and the white rose-bush was covered with hips which were so coated with ice that the red only showed through faintly—probably there was just such fruitage on the bush now. And Ruth—how sweet and dainty and loving she was! How velvet-soft her pink cheeks were! He well remembered when he first took her in his arms, and she laid her bright head on his breast. Had any one ever so loved him since—would any one ever so love him again—or, in fact, love him in any fashion?

There was a sudden revulsion of feeling; like a lightning-flash his real paucity stared him in the face. He became conscious in an instant that in the wide world not one being cared for him—he had done nothing to make them care. He became conscious that all the silver in the universe, all the gold, all his stocks and bonds, if placed in the balance would be outweighed by one faithful, loving heart. As the rose-hips glowed beneath their icy covering, even so his heart began to redden with the flow of memories, and to swell with emotions which threatened to rend its frigid coating. His head felt full to bursting; a sharp pain ran through his temples, and his pulse beat irregularly—sometimes in great thumps, then so slowly. How cool his mother's hand used to be! If he only could put his head in her lap, as he used when a child, and sob away this misery which had suddenly come upon him!

"Mother, oh, mother! I want my mother," he cried in dumb agony, as if he were six instead of sixty-three, and a great tear forced its way out from under his thin, gray lashes and plashed down on the open account-book.

It fell on the sum-total of a column, and, like a miniature microscope, turned 3,764 into 3,764. The great figures mocked him an instant, then became a blurred, bulging spot. "They are nothing," he cried. "Money is nothing, nothing, I want my mother, my lost youth, my wasted years!" And he sobbed as only a man in the extremity of grief can sob.

There was a curious sensation about his heart; a rending and crackling as if the tears had an inward channel and flowed in a hot, scalding stream on its icy encasement.

"What shall I do?" he cried in agony; "what can I do? To-morrow is Christmas and I have no share in it!" He remembered the holidays of his boyhood and the merry children at the homestead; and he remembered, too, that now even the street children shrank from him. He sat in deep thought a moment, then he shut the great books with a bang and put them back in the safe, and before he locked it he put a handful of coin in his pocket, but stealthily, like a man half ashamed of his actions; then, having replaced the other papers, he made all secure for the night and started out.

It was only eight o'clock, and the streets were filled with a merry, eager throng. The crowd was so dense before the shop window where the wonderful snow-scene was displayed that he could hardly make his way, and, as he pressed along, the little girl with the golden curls and blue hood was right before him. There were tears in her eyes and she looked at him appealingly.

"I don't know what I shall do," she said. "My papa told me I might stand here until he came back from the market, and I am afraid I am going to be carried away off with the crowd and get lost."

"Take hold of my hand, little girl, and don't be afraid; I'll take care of you."

It was a great many years since Joel Stormonth's lips had framed such words as those, and they were stiff and unwieldy; but the little girl looked up at him with innocent trust in her sweet eyes, shook back her curls and said:

"All right, but I do wish we could get a little nearer to the window."



So he edged his way with her soft, cold little fingers clinging closely to his gloved hand. Then a sudden impulse moved him to say:

"How would you like to have a doll like that?"

"Oh, my!" she exclaimed. "That would be too beautiful for anything; it would be like a fairy story. But you see I never can have, for my mamma says we must be very economical; papa doesn't make much money."

"We will go into the shop a moment, just near the door, where your father will be sure to see you." Then, before he hardly knew what he was doing, Joel Stormonth bought the doll—and, somehow, such a feeling of liberality came over him that he wished that it cost twice as much—and placed it in the child's arms.

"Here," he said; "it is yours."

"Mine!" she cried, clasping it with ecstasy. Then she looked bewildered and held it toward him. "No, no; I don't dare to take it," and there were tears in her beautiful eyes. "It cost too much—and then my mamma hasn't a single Christmas thing, and Jo hasn't much. I'd rather have something for all of us—or, just nothing at all," she added, politely.

"I was going to give you this for your mother," he said, with ready mendacity. "Where can you put it so that you will not lose it?" And he took out a ten-dollar bill.

"Oh, no," she said, drawing back; "I couldn't think of taking that, too. If mamma knew she wouldn't let me; she'd say I hinted. If I have that you must take back the doll—and—" she added, swallowing a sob at the thought of losing her newly acquired treasure, "I'm afraid you are robbing yourself. You don't look so very rich"—and she gave him a scrutinizing glance.

"In some respects I am far poorer than you are," he said, gravely. "But where can you put this money?"

"Mamma puts it right here, inside my coat; there is a little pocket, and I never lose one penny when I go to market."

Then he fastened in the bill and put the doll in its box and placed it in her arms.

"What a dear, good man you are!" and she gave his hand a little squeeze. "Oh, there is papa!" she cried, as a young man with his arms full of parcels pressed through the crowd, looking anxiously to the right and left.

"This way, papa! Here I am!" and she rushed forward still clinging to Mr. Stormonth's hand.

"I was afraid you were lost," he said with a relieved look. Then, seeing Joel Stormonth, he straightened himself as well as he could, encumbered with parcels. For the encounter filled him with consternation. His irascible employer would probably dismiss him then and there; the tell-tale bundles would stand for so much extravagance—and times were hard and employment would be difficult to find.

While at the same time it flashed through Stormonth's mind that the young man's coat was thin and threadbare; ten dollars a week was really very little upon which to support a family. Heretofore he had considered the sum munificent. "They must live close," he said, "close. It will do 'em good. If they economize they can lay up something out of ten dollars a week. Then the fools needn't encumber themselves with wife and children!" What he said now was, "I have been taking care of your little girl for you, Newell."

"Thank you, sir," returned the clerk, holding one hand behind him as much as possible, although it contained nothing but a paper of celery and a pair of chickens.

"And oh, papa!" exclaimed the child, with shining eyes, "you don't know what is in this box—just the loveliest doll! And in my pocket paper money with two figures on it for mamma and Jo. This dear, kind gentleman gave them to me." And she pressed her cheek against Joel Stormonth's coat sleeve and smiled up in his face with a look in her winsome blue eyes that went straight to his heart and melted the last vestige of ice about it.

"Alice, this is Mr. Stormonth, for whom I work," explained Newell as well as he could for surprise.

"I thought you said he was—he was!"

"What?" sharply asked Stormonth.

Newell's face paled. What if the child should repeat the unflattering description of his employer he had often given her mother.

"Why, just careful of your money," she answered in a little well-bred way. "But that is nothing," she added, naively. "I suppose that is how you are able to give away so much." And again she smiled and patted his hand.

Both men blessed her in their hearts—Newell, for not blurring out the truth and losing him his place, and Stormonth for not openly telling him what he really was—a miserable miser. He felt that he could not bear to hear that from her sweet lips.

"Sir, you are very kind to do all this. I do not know how to thank you," stammered Newell awkwardly.

Mr. Stormonth merely bowed in acknowledgment, and Newell said:

"Come, Alice, let go of Mr. Stormonth's hand. We must not keep him standing in the cold."

"I am just waiting, papa, because I thought perhaps you would invite him to eat dinner with us to-morrow. Mamma cried last night because she hadn't any folks to ask."

Newell's face flushed. "You don't understand, Alice. Mr. Stormonth would hardly care for our humble fare."

The child still clung to his hand, swinging it slightly and standing first on one foot, then on the other. "Wouldn't you?" she asked, earnestly.

"Of all things. Otherwise I shall eat a solitary meal at my club."

"I am sure you will be welcome," said Newell with embarrassment. "But we are very plain folks."

"So much the better. At what time, may I ask?"

"At three o'clock, I remember hearing my wife say."

"Good-bye," said Alice. "I wish I had a Christmas present for you," she added, regretfully. "I might kiss you. Papa says I kiss very sweet, and that when he has the blues it cheers him up. I thought you looked kind of lonesome like." Joel Stormonth bent his gray head and the child pressed her soft lips to his furrowed cheek.

How fragrant her breath was! And how sweet her rosy lips were! They thrilled him all through. It was as if a

balmy southern breeze touched a frosty February day with its revivifying power. He stood more erect and went on his homeward way with a brisk little step.

Naturally, his heart, so recently freed from its frigid covering, was sensitive, and it pierced him to the quick to see that as he approached a group of newsboys and bootblacks who always convened on a certain corner, they fell back on either side, all their boisterous mirth hushed. They couldn't have huddled more closely together if a biting north wind had swept up the street. One, evidently a new-comer, had the temerity to thrust out his arm in its ragged sleeve and spread open his dirty red fingers and say:

"Gimme a Chris'mus nickle."

Then they all laughed in derision.

"There ain't no stufin' in old Strongbox," said one, in a low tone, but not so low but that Joel Stormonth heard him.

"Nobody never knowed him to give nothin' to nobody," whispered another.

The old man stopped irresolutely—his heart ached and quivered as if the words were so many fiery little darts aimed straight at it. "Boys," he said, and there was a little tremor in his cold, hard voice, and his sentence was labored, "I wish you a merry Christmas, and here is something to help you have it with;" and he put his hand in his pocket and drew out coins of different denominations. "But I want you to be honorable and make a fair division."

For a moment they stood as if stupefied, then one stepped forward and dragged his tattered cap off his head. "We ax yer pardon, sir. Yer a better man 'n what we thought you wus. And now," he said, turning to the others and swinging his old cap, "A merry Chris'mus to Mister Stormuth! Hooray fur Mister Stormuth!"

The rest of the way home Joel Stormonth sped along as if rejuvenescence had really set in—for he had bathed in that wonderful fountain of generosity and kindness toward our fellow-men—a fountain whose waters smooth away wrinkles and restore activity to stiffened limbs.

His rooms had little look of holiday cheer. The fire in the grate was low, and as the dinner hour was long past he rang for luncheon to be brought him. The neat maid who responded looked pale and tired and put the tray down in a mechanical fashion and turned to go.

"Wait a moment, Mary," he said, and she stopped with a resigned look on her face. He always exacted extra service and found fault.

"You have waited on me nicely for some time. Take this bill and buy yourself a Christmas present; or, better yet, put it in the bank for a rainy day."

Mary looked at the bill, then looked at him, then she leaned her head on the mantel and cried as if her heart would break.

Mr. Stormonth walked fustily back and forth and hemmed and hawed.

"You'd better go, Mary," he said, uneasily.

"Do excuse me, sir, but I was so discouraged, and my mother is sick and needs so many things. Why, this money will save her life! And I thank you a thousand times! I shall pray on my bended knees that to-morrow may be the happiest Christmas you ever knew."

But Joel Stormonth sadly shook his head—Christmas could hold nothing for him—and sat before the fire and brooded a long time. His reflections must have been sad and softening, for two great tears rolled down his cheeks and fell hot and burning on his thin old hands, and he went over to the bed and buried his head in the clothes. He tried to pray, but his unwonted lips could not frame a sentence. Finally, as if wrung from his heart's depths, came the words, "God forgive me!"

Somehow his sleep was sweet and sound that night—soft hands touched his brow, fair faces smiled into his, he lived over again all that had been beautiful in his past. And, the next afternoon, when he dressed to go to his clerk's little dinner, it seemed but a continuation of the dream.

Little Mrs. Newell heard his knock with trepidation—they had just been discussing him: Would, or would not, he think her nice? she had asked her husband; and was not the dinner plain almost to meagreness?

"He will think you the loveliest little woman in the world," returned the tall, handsome fellow. "And as for the dinner, if it is good enough for us it is for him," he declared, with sturdy independence.

Joel Stormonth was not sure whether he was dead or alive after he had been in the little parlor a moment. Perhaps his sins had been forgiven and he was in heaven—it was so warm and cozy, and such an angelic being, with tender blue eyes, waving golden hair and a gracious smile, insisted upon helping him with his overcoat. Then a pair of plump arms were thrown about his neck and Alice left a dainty little kiss upon his cheek, and there were a great many "Merry Christmases"; and before he knew it a fine chubby little boy had climbed up in his lap and was looking at his watch.

Then the dinner—such delicious oyster soup and crisp celery, such tender, moist, delicately browned chickens, and currant jelly which quivered in an old glass dish like an animated ruby. And by and by little Alice took his plate, brushed the table neatly, and brought cranberry pie and a dainty pudding. He ate the pie and praised the cook, which made her blush and smile and show her dimples; then he took up the spoon which lay beside his pudding, but instead of using it he turned it over and over and looked at it closely; then he polished his glasses and looked at it again, and the hand which held it trembled, as did his voice.

"Where did you get this spoon?" he asked.

"Oh, dear!" thought Mrs. Newell, "he thinks because I have a silver spoon with a crest I am extravagant."

"It was my great-grandmother's," she answered with some confusion.

"And her name was?"—then he leaned eagerly forward.

"Sylvester, and that was the crest of her family."

"Your grandmother's name?"

"Stormonth, the same as yours, although I do not suppose that you were the most distant relations."

"Your mother's name?"

"Amy Stormonth; and there my knowledge of the family genealogy ends. You see, my mother made an unfortunate

marriage and was separated from her friends. She died when I was born and my father soon after. I was adopted by distant relatives of my father's and lived with them until I married."

"Have you letters of your mother's?" And the old man's face was very pale and his voice trembled as he asked the question.

"Oh, yes; right here in this desk"—and Mrs. Newell opened it and handed him a package of yellow old letters. "These were from her brother, whose name, by the way, was the same as yours. We have always thought it a strange coincidence."

Joel Stormonth's hand shook as she placed the letters in it. He unfolded and read a few in a dazed sort of way, then, covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud.

"What is it?" cried Alice, running to his side with ready sympathy.

"Are you ill?" asked Mrs. Newell anxiously.

"No, no," he answered; "but in me you see the miserable man who wrote these cold, unfeeling letters in response to his only sister's appeal for help. I was your mother's brother." And his remorse-stricken conscience gave his worn old face such a look of utter wretchedness that tears of pity sprang into Alice's eyes. She put her soft little palm upon his furrowed cheek and gently stroked it, and with tender touch put back the straggling gray locks that had fallen over his forehead.

"Are you sorry that you did it?" she asked, earnestly.

A look of unutterable anguish spread over his features. "If I only could undo it!" he exclaimed.

"When I have been naughty and am sorry for it my mamma says, 'Now let us begin over again. Can't you just do that way?' she asked, eagerly, bending her little rosebud face and looking earnestly into his sad, hopeless eyes.

"If you will only let me," he returned humbly, rising and looking at Mrs. Newell. She stood irresolute a moment. It was hard to forgive—her mother had suffered so much. Then her better nature conquered; she stepped to his side, took his hand, and laid her bright head on his shoulder.

"If you only knew," she said, "how I have longed for kindred of my own, and how dear you will be to me and how happy I hope to make you—" then her voice filled with tears. Alice clung to his other hand and danced wildly about.

"Is he my grandpa?" she asked. "I always wanted one."

"No, but he is your uncle, my dear."

"Mine uncle, too," cried little Jo, who had been dividing his attention between a toy and the unusual scene, but who now came to the front and seized Mr. Stormonth by the leg. Then Newell came forward and offered his congratulations in a frank, manly fashion.

What happiness Joel Stormonth felt as they all stood around him—and how rapidly he fell to planning! Among his vast possessions there was a great up-town mansion, and when he rented it at an enormous price to a salaried man he was wont to remark, with a niggardly smile of sarcasm, that when he got rich he meant to live in such a house. Now it seemed not half good enough, but he would modernize and furnish it sumptuously, and then, if little Mrs. Newell would live with such a crabbed old man, he would install her as mistress. Alice should have every advantage money could give her; Newell should be taken into partnership, and some day little Joel Stormonth Newell should succeed to the business.

As he went home under the beautiful star-sprinkled sky the sweet story of the Christ-child was no longer a myth to him; and there was meaning in the deep-voiced melody of the Christmas bells; and so, with the memory of warm kisses on his lips, and with love and peace in his heart, he fell asleep amid their joyous clamor to awaken to a wider, nobler life.

## GIVE THE OLD YEAR HIS DUE.

Yes, give the poor Old Year his due  
Before we toll his knell!  
He's been a faithful friend to us,  
And served us long and well.  
Oh, was it not his hand that brought  
The springtime's wealth of green,  
And flung into the lap of May  
Fit garlands for a queen?  
And though among the blossoms fair  
He dropped some sprigs of rue,  
We'll take him by the hand and give  
The poor Old Year his due!

When summer held high carnival  
Among her sylvan bowers,  
Was not his hand the one to strew  
Her onward path with flowers?  
And when, in billowy harvest fields,  
The reapers' song went round,  
Did he not loiter on his way,  
Till all the sheaves were bound?  
And if among the bearded grain  
Some blighted stalks there grew  
We'll winnow out the gold and give  
The good Old Year his due!

Ah! was he not our comrade still  
Through many a glade and wold,  
When all the autumn trees were gowned  
In crimson, dun, and gold?  
And when his hair and beard grew white  
With flakes of wintry snow,  
Did he not bring the Christmas joys  
To set our hearts aglow?  
And if the brimming cup he held  
Was mixed with sorrow, too,  
We'll drain it to the dregs and give  
The kind Old Year his due!

HELEN WHITNEY CLARK.





GRANDMA'S PORTRAIT.  
DRAWN BY MISS G. A. DAVIS.

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"He drew an envelope from his pocket and held it toward her."

## A FLOATING CORK.

By MARGARET BERKELEY.

It was three days before Christmas.

Miss Rosina Redding stood studying her time-table as she warmed herself by the stove in the little junction station-house. She was waiting for the train which was to connect with the one which had dropped her there ten minutes before.

To the theatre-going world she was better known as Rosina Redding without the prefix.

To her fellow-actors in the Thomas Company she was "Rosy," but to her family, in the long ago when she had possessed one, she had been Martha Carrick,—or Patsy, as a more familiar title.

The Thomas Company had been starring in the Pacific States, but were now at home in New York. They were to open their own theatre on Christmas night with a new play called "The Christmas-Tree," and Miss Redding was following them alone. She had been delayed by a cold, which the local doctor pronounced too serious to be trifled with in the severe weather.

For the Christmas performance on opening night she was, however, indispensable, and telegrams had been flying back and forth, the last announcing that Miss Redding had recovered and was now on her way.

"I shall just make it," said Miss Redding to herself. "If

rails hold and steam can carry, Christmas evening sees me there."

She did not add "*Deo volente*," as a well-brought-up young woman might have done; but then, Miss Redding had never been brought up at all. Whatever she was, she had made herself, and this consciousness, far from saddening, gave her a lively satisfaction.

There was nothing about the young actress to indicate her profession. Her furs and dark traveling dress were no richer or more showy than they should have been, and as she stood first warming one foot and then the other at the stove, her bearing was rather retiring than otherwise.

The door of the waiting-room presently opened to admit a fresh set of travelers, among the man old man and his wife, whom Miss Redding characterized as "thin old and fat old." The old woman was round and fat and breathless, but pleasant to look at. The old man was bent and withered, and what had formerly been a Roman nose and a determined chin, now joined issues over his sunken lips.

He sat on the bench which ran about the wall, leaning his chin on his hand, which in its turn rested on the knotted head of the heavy oak stick he carried.

"I wonder," thought Miss Redding; "I do wonder if I shall

come to look like that. It's all very well now to be 'slender as a fern, and to dance like a leaf'—she quoted from her last newspaper clipping—"particularly well for stage purposes, but *thin old* is awful."

The next arrival was a woman, her sex determined chiefly by her bonnet, although its untied strings, as they floated behind her, seemed mutely protesting.

By the side of this amazon appeared a small boy, from the sight of whom Miss Redding turned away with a shiver. Although never partial to little boys, she had a peculiar horror of them when associated with little cats, and this particular little boy was swinging his kitten by the tail.

Behind this trio entered a substantial, manly figure, at which Miss Redding, forgetful of her manners, stared with all her eyes.

It was not because he was well-looking—she was not unused to seeing well-looking men—her gaze was fixed below all this on the stranger's feet, which, in spite of the cold, were encased in a pair of forlorn old carpet-slippers, very loose at the heels—a strange contrast to his otherwise luxurious outfit of warm cloth and fur.

The stranger set down his bag and umbrella in the corner and drew near the stove, his large proportions effectually



blocking out any other view for Miss Redding. She was wondering whether his uneasy walk was caused by his eccentric foot-covering, or if there were a hidden reason to account for both, when a sudden commotion in the room made her look up quickly to find that the stranger was studying her face as intently as she was his feet, and with an unmistakable expression of admiring amusement.

Miss Redding, thus recalled to herself, might have been more embarrassed had not the confusion about them risen to a point which claimed undivided attention. It seemed that the little boy had wearied of such minor cruelties as standing on his kitten's tail, and making of it a living wheelbarrow by catching its hind legs and trundling it about the room.

Stimulated by the horror of the bystanders, he had proceeded to more ingenious tortures, when some one interposed. This had been the signal for the uproar. Tossing back the inappropriate bonnet-strings, the amazon advanced, daring interference, and one by one the waiting-room was emptied of its guests, who preferred facing the piercing cold outside to enduring the sights and sounds within.

Only the old couple in the corner and the young one by the stove remained.

With this diminished audience, Danny, for that was the name of the youthful hero, seemed to flag in his enjoyment, until his wicked little eyes fastened on the red-hot stove. Then he darted forward and in another moment poor kitty's pink nose would have been fried into a thing of the past, had not the slippered stranger thrust back the child with one large hand and wrested the kitten from him with the other.

"Hold on there, youngster," said a bass voice with good-humored decision; "there's an end to all things."

The old man in the corner, who had been shaking his head and muttering with pursed-up lips, now beat applause on the floor with his stick.

"That's right—that's all right, stranger," he quavered.

But all was by no means right. Danny's mamma was still present, and she made her presence felt.

Miss Redding was not easily frightened. She had known what the anger of men meant in her unsheltered life. She had faced furious managers and stood her ground, but the outburst which ensued was far different from anything she had ever seen, and, fairly trembling, she sought refuge with the old couple on the other side of the room.

"Pardon me, madam," said the stranger, grimly, "but if you have no sensibilities, others have, and whether you like it or not, this torture must stop here."

The enraged woman seemed to meditate a personal attack, but changed her plan suddenly. After one step forward and a second glance at the size of the kitten's champion, she rushed from the waiting-room, screaming something about her husband and an ample vengeance, leaving the stranger with the cat in one hand and her hopeful offspring squirming in the other.

Presently the back door of the waiting-room opened and the heralded opponent entered, which he had to bend his head to do.

"Oh, it is not a man, it's a giant," whispered Miss Redding to herself, not without reason. Danny's papa was fully six feet five in height, and broad in proportion, with a fist like a flour-barrel.

The kitten's champion was by no means a tall man, his size lying chiefly in his breadth and muscular development. He began a good-humored explanation to the giant, but under the shower of abuse and vituperation from husband and wife, it was evident that his temper was rising, and at last broke bounds in retort quite as forcible if more refined. Suddenly the giant's enormous arm swung out. Had the ponderous fist at the end of it reached its mark there must have been but little of that target left. The stranger dropped both kitten and child and ducked, coming up under the guard with all his wrath concentrated in two sharp blows on nose and eyes, beneath which the giant reeled and fell with a crash which shook the building. The stranger stepped back to let him rise, but as the prostrate Goliath reared his large bulk, curses dropping from his lips as rapidly as blood from his nose, his conqueror seemed to change his mind, and, seizing him by the collar, began a punishment not to be readily forgotten. Yet the fallen was not in want of aid. His wife clutched the stranger's coat-tails in a grasp not to be shaken off by any efforts, while Danny clung howling to her skirts.

The human chain hung together, dashing about the little waiting-room like a great game of fox-and-goose, in a Bedlam of oaths and blows and blood.

But an unexpected ally arose for the minority.

In his corner the old man had been uttering faint cries of—"At him! give it to him!" from between his toothless gums. Now his bent form straightened and the fire of youth blazed again in his eye. With wonderful agility he shook off his wife's restraining arms, and toddled across the room to beat upon Goliath's feet with the knotted head of his stick, still crying in his shrill quaver—"Give it to him—give it to him!"

At last, at a wail of anguish from Danny, the mother turned and dropped the coat-tails. The whole chain fell to pieces.

Danny had had summary justice meted out to him. In the wild swing he had been thrown against the hot stove, and received that which he had destined for the kitten.

All had happened with a rapidity impossible to convey in the telling.

A few moments later the beaten giant was lying in a semi-unconscious condition on a truck.

Danny was howling in his mother's arms, and the stranger was in the constable's hands on a charge of assault and battery.

That official's position was not an easy one. It is difficult to arrest the hero of the hour. There was not a woman on the platform who was not enthusiastically on the side of the kitten's preserver; but as they all gave in their testimony at the same time and with one voice, the effect was not so telling as it might have been.

Miss Redding alone stood by silent, her eyes shining, her cheeks flushed.

The constable clapped his hands over his ears, and turned in despair to his captive, who in a few words told his story.

He gave his name as James Kingstone, a ranch owner in

California, and claimed that his actions had been purely those of self-defense.

The constable shook his head, glancing from the figure on the truck to Mr. Kingstone, whose only marks of the conflict lay in a somewhat disordered and heated appearance, and the loss of one slipper, which an admirer was at that moment having the honor to return to him.

"Self-defense, eh?" said the constable, grinning. "Say, captain, what do you do when you start in to fight? Sorry for it, but looks are against you. I shall have to put you under arrest."

Mr. Kingstone interrupted the chorus of protests.

"It is very necessary for me to get on," he said. "The truth is, I am a sick man. I stepped into poison ivy last summer, and it's broken out again now. The doctor has ordered me East for a change. I don't want to miss Christmas at home, and be cooped up here when I am traveling for my health."

The constable laughed outright.

"Health," he repeated. "Lord! health!"

The whistle of the incoming train blew in the distance.

"Look here," said Mr. Kingstone, hastily. "I'll plead guilty and deposit my fine. I can't lose that train."

The constable hesitated. The train drew up at the station. Mr. Kingstone put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a fat pocket book, at the sight of which the official's sense of duty declined.

The confusion on the platform increased. There were some who refused to enter the cars without the kitten's preserver, and others who must get on, and therefore redoubled their entreaties. Miss Redding was among none of these. We hear of the discipline of the army, and the discipline of the navy, and organized discipline of all kinds, but perhaps the severest of any is that accorded by the public to those who minister to their pleasure on the stage. It would not have occurred to Rosina Redding, however interested she might be, to risk losing her train, and she was the first to enter it.

Under much pressure, the constable was wavering. At a final brush from the tips of Mr. Kingstone's fingers on his palm the official melted wholly. There was a general scramble for the cars. Mr. Kingstone shuffled into a parlor. The whistle blew and the train steamed away from the station, and the family of Danny were seen no more.

"But what became of the little kitten?" asked a voice.

There was no answer. In the skirmish, the little fur-covered bone of contention had been wholly forgotten, and had disappeared.

Mr. Kingstone established himself in his chair and settled down at last to rest and peaceful slumber.

Station after station passed; people came and went and still he slept on until he was roused at last by a woman's voice in his ear.

"Excuse me, but I believe it is under your chair."

"What?" asked the sleeper, starting up.

"That lady's cat."

Mr. Kingstone was a patient man, but this was almost too much. He muttered something about being "cursed with cats"—rose, and with his umbrella poked out a bunch of yellow fur from under his chair. The lady who had spoken pointed out a seat at the other end of the car, and Mr. Kingstone went toward it with the little cat in his hand, to find himself once more face to face with Miss Redding.

She stretched out her hands silently, but Mr. Kingstone did not offer to put the kitten into them. He looked from the kitten to her and from her to the kitten.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed, suddenly, "I believe it's the selfsame cat."

"It is," said Miss Redding, calmly. "I picked it up as I went off."

Mr. Kingstone looked at her with the same expression of mingled amusement and admiration which she had caused at their earlier meeting.

"How did you manage it?" he asked.

"I hid her under my cloak; she was very quiet until that express train passed. It frightened her and she jumped out."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Kingstone, smiling, "she thought it was Danny in pursuit."

He was still standing with the kitten in his hand, and Miss Redding saw his eyes turn toward the vacant chair beside her.

In the Thomas Company Miss Redding was known as one of the most circumspect of its maidens. Her manner was decidedly conclusive as she again held out her hand.

"I am sorry you should have been troubled," she said.

But if it were Miss Redding's intention that the interview should end there, she should not have raised her eyes at that moment. When she had last applied for a raise of salary from Manager Thomas she had quite seriously mentioned them as an item on her side, claiming that they alone were worth the increase, and the manager, looking into their limpid depths opened for his inspection, had yielded with a laugh.

Mr. Kingstone laid the kitten on Miss Redding's lap, but he did not immediately move away.

"Do you mean to keep her?" he said.

"Yes," answered Miss Redding; "I think I shall."

"You care for cats, then?"

"No, not generally; but this seems a particularly nice one."

"It may be on the principle of stolen fruit," ventured Mr. Kingstone.

Miss Redding smiled, but with no encouragement.

"I am glad to think of her having a good home," Mr. Kingstone went on. "What shall you name her?"

"I had hardly thought. Something to commemorate the fact that I stole her, I suppose."

"Why not that?" asked Mr. Kingstone, with a sudden laugh.

Miss Redding raised those wonderful eyes of hers questioningly.

"Istoler," said Mr. Kingstone. "Don't you think that a good name?"

There are, as all anglers know, all kinds of baits for all kinds of fish. Some must be coaxed with one fly, some with another.

Miss Redding's fly was laughter. Her eyes filled with it

before she could lower them, and from them it rippled down to her lips.

Mr. Kingstone sat down in the vacant chair.

The little kitten moved restlessly in the fur nest its new mistress had arranged for it in her lap, and Miss Redding looked troubled.

"I am sure she is hungry," she said. "I have been worrying over it for an hour. But what can I do?"

It was more easily managed than she could have imagined. A few moments after the short conference held between Mr. Kingstone and the porter, a newspaper as table-cloth, a saucer of milk and Istoler were comfortably established between the carpet-slippers and the small leather boots.

"She will be a very pretty cat when she isn't frightened, and has time to wash herself a little," said Miss Redding, looking down at the kitten lapping and purring contentedly. "I do hope she feels properly grateful to you."

"She ought to," answered Mr. Kingstone, "when she considers that her relative size to Danny and mine to Danny's papa were about equal."

Miss Redding looked up reflectively.

"It must be nice not to be afraid," she said; "never to feel your heart shrink up and shudder down into your very boots."

"Mine didn't hide in my boots to-day," said Mr. Kingstone, laughing, "but only because it had no boots to hide in. I am but a man in slippers, you see. Wait until you meet a Western man with his boots on. I assure you I was frightened enough when that monster loomed in the doorway."

"He didn't look half so big there as he did when he lay on the floor," said Miss Redding with interest. "Then I thought he looked like a whale."

"He did. That was all which excused my banging a prostrate foe. I felt that if the leviathan once got on his legs again I should be swallowed alive. I was more afraid of madame and a blade of cold steel in my back than anything else, though."

"And all that," said Miss Redding, bending to run the tip of her finger lightly down the dark buff line which marked the kitten's back-bone, "all that about this funny, furry scrap, not twelve inches long, including the tail."

Mr. Kingstone looked down also and laughed, as he caught sight of his dilapidated slippers. "Which do you think taxed my courage most?" he said, "to stand up to the Danny family, or to travel from California to New York in these? I was bent on coming, and they were the only things on the ranch that would go on. It was better than traveling like a Pilgrim Father. But once to-day, and for the first time in my life, I longed for petticoats."

Miss Redding dropped her eyes guiltily. When she glanced up again Mr. Kingstone was still looking at her with a smile which she could only answer in kind.

And why not? After all, she was only an ambitious little actress in a second-rate company, with some education and natural refinement, possessing also that peculiar American beauty with its almost arrogant appearance of high breeding and patrician blood, based perhaps on a paternal greengrocer and a maternal bar-maid.

There was no lack of respect in Mr. Kingstone's merriment or in his manner, and she came in contact with something different often enough to be sadly quick to distinguish. She was alone, still half convalescent, and as depressed as her self-reliant spirit allowed. He was companionable, ready, and sound in body and mind, except for his poisoned feet, which he seemed to regard merely as a grand and glorious joke.

It was very pleasant—and why not? Miss Redding could see no reason, and her last reserves melted.

On Mr. Kingstone's side there was but little to melt. It was he who talked and she who listened. It was all so new to her, this life he told her of. The breezy, open-air existence, the broad spirit of the plains, had become as a part of the man. Her freedom and independence, her absorbing interest in the constant dissecting of the subtleties of life which her profession taught to her, seemed to dwarf suddenly.

This was freedom, this was living! She listened breathlessly, sitting with Istoler in her lap, caressing her long ears and holding her soft paws in her hand. Now and then the little animal sat up and made its toilet, weakly, as she had predicted. And now and then, as he talked, Mr. Kingstone bent forward and took the kitten into his own large hand.

Miss Redding watched this slayer of giants and caresser of cats with some wonder. If her caresses were more graceful than his, it was because she did well all that she undertook. His were those of the genuine lover of dumb beasts, and Miss Redding had not been thrown with men who petted cats.

"You see we were frightfully poor when I made my bolt for the West," went on Mr. Kingstone. "We had lost all we had in the world. It was a good thing, as it turned out, but I wonder if you know what homesickness means?"

Miss Redding smiled an odd little smile as a memory of what her home had been arose before her.

"No," she said, "I don't believe I do know."

"I don't suppose you have ever known what it meant to be hungry, either?" said Mr. Kingstone, laughing. "It's much the same feeling. Sometimes I used to wonder which was which."

Miss Redding smiled again, but committed herself to nothing.

"Everything was different," Mr. Kingstone went on. "The only thing that looked like home was the sun. I got some comfort out of it by day and out of the moon and stars by night."

He shook his shoulders as if throwing off a remembrance.

"Well, it's all over now, and with no scars left, thank God! That's the rub with a successful man. They are apt to come out on the other side marked for life somehow."

"Then you did succeed?"

"Yes, I have done fairly well. I am a wealthy man as men go. But it's only changing one kind of work for another, after all. My partner is never able to spare me. I have been waiting for fifteen years to get sick for a holiday, and it's been long in coming. This is my first visit East since I left there. It has been all that time since I saw my people. Now we are going to have a good old-fashioned Christmas together. They have promised me a Christmas-tree, a pudding on fire, a stocking

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and all. Yes, life has been slow to answer sometimes, but she has given me what I asked for in the end. That's pretty much all I have to tell. That's the history of my life."

If his words were meant as an invitation for a counter confidence, they met with no such response from Miss Redding. Early in the conversation her companion had told her his name, but he was still ignorant of hers.

He was now looking at her closely. "Yes, I am sure of it," he said. "I have seen you somewhere."

Miss Redding started. "Where?" she asked.

"That's just it. I can't place it; but I am positive that I have. Have you ever been in San Francisco?"

A recollection of the San Francisco theatre and a sea of faces rose before Miss Redding's eyes. Yes, she was sure he had seen her, although she had not distinguished him. He had been the mass and she the unit.

"Oh, yes, I have been there," she replied.

"Then I may have seen you at the theatre, perhaps?"

All the gypsy blood in Miss Redding's veins laughed aloud. Her eyes filled with mischief. She dropped her lashes, her eyes looking out at him from between their dark shadows.

"Yes," she said, with gravity, "you may. I was at the theatre pretty constantly."

Mr. Kingstone was still regarding her closely, apparently searching his memory. He shook his head and gave it up.

"I wonder if you realize how hard it is to talk and avoid using any name," he said, finally.

"My name is Patsy Carrick," answered Miss Redding; and as she spoke she laughed suddenly for no obvious reason.

It was perfectly true. That had been her name in a previous existence, now so far behind her that the words did not come very trippingly from her lips. Her companion had already partially recognized her. She knew it would only have been necessary for her to say Rosina Redding for him to place her entirely, and not as a star, to be treated with the deference due to one.

She had been wonderfully clever to have gained the position she held. And she meant to do better, but that had not come yet. In the meantime she would be Patsy Carrick to whom she chose. Matters were well as they stood, and after all it was no affair of his.

"Miss Carrick," said Mr. Kingstone. "Patsy Carrick! What a quaint, catchy little name."

"It is a pity they changed it, then," thought Miss Redding. "Rosina Redding looks better on a poster, though."

"And are you going East for Christmas, also?" asked Mr. Kingstone.

"Yes, I am on my way to New York. My people are arranging for a Christmas festival, too. I must be in time for it."

"Shall you have a Christmas-tree?"

The corners of Miss Redding's mouth twitched.

"Yes, we are going to have a Christmas-tree, and I have engaged to dance a fancy dance around it with some of the children."

It was all true, every word of it. Was not the new play, "A Christmas-Tree," and was not the new fancy dance expected to be one of its leading features?

"I would give the world to see it," said Mr. Kingstone, and Miss Redding had to bite her tongue. "You could see it for a good deal less and from an orchestra-chair," was on the tip of it. But she closed her teeth firmly. Her eyes were alive with laughter.

"Shall you have only your family party, or will there be strangers in also?" Mr. Kingstone went on.

"We generally have outsiders in, more or less," responded Miss Redding, dryly. "We rather expect a crowd on Christmas night."

"I like a strictly family party," said Mr. Kingstone; "but perhaps there are not many of you and you have to call your neighbors in?"

"No, we are not a small family. Indeed, we are rather a large one; all brothers and sisters, though. Our elder brother, Thomas, has to be father and mother both. In fact, Thomas is general manager for all of us. Poor Thomas! I am afraid we lead him a sad life sometimes—when he doesn't lead us one."

She laughed the same suppressed, intensely-amused little laugh.

"Thomas Carrick! That's a nice name, too," said Mr. Kingstone. "I suppose you call him Tom, though?"

"I never did," answered Miss Redding; and this time she laughed aloud.

Mr. Kingstone joined in her mirth without requiring explanation. He laughed readily, also—the laughter of a light heart and an easy conscience.

He had learned what he had wished, or thought he had, and he was more than content. Miss Carrick, as he now called her, was as piquant and charming a companion as any man could wish. Independent as she was, he yet found a thousand ways of being useful to her, as a man may to a woman traveling alone. The hours flew by, and Mr. Kingstone felt more and more that his lines had been cast in pleasant places.

Thus time went on.

"Two days more and then New York," said Mr. Kingstone. "It has been two days already—four in all. Two days doesn't seem long as a measure of time, does it?"

"No," answered Miss Redding, "because two days are not long."

"But don't look at it in quite that way," urged her companion. "Take two days of fourteen hours each and you get twenty-eight hours. Now suppose I had been calling on you, say twice a week, an hour and a half a visit. How many weeks would it take to use up those twenty-eight hours? Three hours a week—three into twenty-eight—over nine weeks, you see. About three months. I have known you three months if you will only consent to count it that way."

"I never considered it in that light," said Miss Redding, cautiously.

"But then, when it amounts up to four days—six months," Mr. Kingstone went on, "then—"

It was not a very usual style of conversation for a two days' acquaintanceship, but then, as Miss Redding reflected, nothing about it had been usual, which was perhaps what made it so

enjoyable. Only she wished Mr. Kingstone would stop talking about her family and that Christmas festival. The joke was losing its zest with repetition.

It was now the morning of Christmas Eve. To-morrow would be Christmas Day. Then would come Christmas night, when New York would be reached and she would be acting her new part in "The Christmas-Tree."

The part of Patsy Carrick must then be thrown aside. It had been pleasant acting, and to a limited audience not difficult to please. Miss Redding thought of making her last speech in it with regret. She wondered if her audience would ever find her out, and how she would manage to make her escape if she saw him at the terminus. That she was going to escape she was determined—the more so, that she could no longer disguise from herself the growing warmth in the manner and words of this impetuous Westerner.

"It is impossible," said Miss Redding to herself, when this idea first occurred to her—"impossible! The man has only known me two days."

But by nightfall on Christmas Eve there could have been no doubts lingering in the mind of even a less sophisticated maiden. Those half sentences and eloquent pauses could have but one meaning, preposterous as it appeared.

Miss Redding knew she had only to open her lips and confess her fraud to put an end to it all. Yet she felt strangely reluctant to do so. It was very pleasant while it lasted. She preferred enjoying it to the full and then disappearing mysteriously at the journey's end—to be wondered over, looked for, perhaps even mourned for a while, and then to be, of course, forgotten.

"What are you sighing about?" asked Mr. Kingstone. "It is wicked to sigh on Christmas Eve. What are we going to do for Christmas Day? We are in for part of it, any way."

"Do?" said Miss Redding, rousing with a laugh at her own expense. "Why, what can we do? We can't send one another Christmas boxes on a railway. You must wait until you reach home for your feasting and gifts. I have nothing to offer you, unless Istoler might answer."

"There's one thing no one is ever without," said Mr. Kingstone, "and it is given ungrudgingly, too. Suppose you offer me some advice."

"I have never yet refused that," replied Miss Redding, but Mr. Kingstone did not immediately continue.

"What would you do," he said at last, "if one of your friends wrote asking your congratulations on a matter in which you thought he had behaved abominably?"

"It would depend on what he had done."

Mr. Kingstone hesitated again. "Well, the way of it is this. He has engaged himself to a girl whom he met in mid ocean. She was crossing in the care of a friend—of a friend who neglected her shamelessly. He fell in love with her and addressed her then and there, where she hadn't a chance to find out anything about him."

"Or he about her," suggested Miss Redding.

"Oh, girls are always all right," replied Mr. Kingstone, indifferently. "But he might have been a mere adventurer."

"Yes; he might or she might."

"Of course, he might have been all right," added Mr. Kingstone, hastily, "and as it happened, he was. But it wasn't fair to the girl. He should have waited until he got to the other side and put himself in communication with her relatives there. He could have found out who they were from her easily enough."

"Unless she hadn't any."

"Well, her guardian, then."

"Perhaps she had no guardian either."

"But she must have had some one, you know. Girls don't go bobbing about the world with no anchorage, like a floating cork."

"No," said Miss Redding, slowly; "I suppose not."

It was soon after this that she became silent and preoccupied, and then, saying that she was tired, she went to her berth.

"A floating cork," said Miss Redding to her pillow—"a floating cork!"

She lay staring up at the coffin-like lid of her berth. She was living over her not unsuccessful life. That a woman should have anchorage seemed in Mr. Kingstone's mind a foregone conclusion. She wondered what he would think if he ever discovered that he had almost offered himself to a girl who was but a floating cork. If to escape him were a desire before, it was now a necessity.

Miss Redding had looked at the family life of her companions, and had thanked heaven from the bottom of her lawless little heart that she traveled through life alone; but—was she a "floating cork?"

She found suddenly that the pillow beneath her cheek was wet.

"This is that silly Patsy Carrick, I suppose," said Miss Redding, sitting up in her berth with a grim little laugh. "What next?"

She put back her hair from her hot face with both hands. "Patsy Carrick or Rosina Redding—what am I?" she asked, half aloud, and answered herself—"a floating cork."

Yes, nothing else; bedecked with fluttering ribbons, bedight with feathers and furbelows that glittered and dazzled—pretty and gay enough, perhaps, but under it all, nothing but a miserable little bit of floating cork, at the mercy of any wind that blew or wave that swelled.

Miss Redding could remember some Christmases that had been bad enough, but she would have exchanged any of them for this one before the watches of the night were over.

When she had finished dressing her hair at the wavering mirror on Christmas morning she still stood before it, looking at her reflection. The dark lines under her eyes she could not control, but she gazed steadily into the glass until the droop at the corners of her mouth had disappeared and the strained expression had gone from about her eyes.

She had risen early, which was not usual to her, and she supposed that she and Istoler, who lay curled up in her usual nest in her mistress's lap, were the only souls awake in the car.

When Mr. Kingstone walked down the aisle and stood by her chair Miss Redding looked up with a start.

"I suppose you meant to catch the whole car Christmas

gift," he said. "You forgot there was a rancher aboard. A merry Christmas to you!" He held out his hand, and, after an imperceptible hesitation, Miss Redding put hers into it—"And Christmas gift," added Mr. Kingstone.

Miss Redding shook her head.

"It is of no use," she said. "I have nothing that will answer, as you scorn Istoler."

"Would you give me something if you had it?"

"Yes," she replied.

Mr. Kingstone looked at her and seemed about to speak, then dropped her hand and glanced around the car.

"Christmas Day, and not a branch of holly or a sprig of evergreen!" he said. "I think railroad companies should be forced by law to dress the cars at Christmas. I am glad that you are up early. I have been waiting to speak to you. I want to ask a favor. If you were willing to give me a Christmas gift, you may be willing to grant this."

"Wait a moment," said Miss Redding, breathlessly. "I have something to say, also."

Why she was taking this sudden resolution that she was, she did not herself know. Mr. Kingstone was looking down at her with grave, inquiring eyes, and she closed her own.

"I am not Patsy Carrick," said Miss Redding, with a desperate breath.

"Not Patsy Carrick!" repeated Mr. Kingstone's bewildered voice.

Miss Redding opened her eyes and looked up at him steadily. "No; that is, I have not been Patsy Carrick for so long that I have lost my right to the name. I am really Rosina Redding. That is my stage name. I am an actress in the Thomas Company."

Mr. Kingstone sat down in the chair beside her. His eyes did not leave her face, but hers never fell.

"Rosina Redding," he repeated. "Then I did see you in San Francisco."

"Yes; singing and dancing, as you might have seen me on any stage in any State in the Union. I have never taken men's parts, probably because they would not have suited me. And I have chosen to be careful. But I have deceived you in every thing else. I have nothing; I am nobody."

"But your family, and the Christmas party?"

"The Christmas-Tree is our new play. My brothers and sisters are my fellow-actors in the Thomas Company. Mr. Thomas himself is our manager. Now you have heard all that there is to know."

She turned away as she ended.

There was a long pause.

"Then," said Mr. Kingstone, at last, "whom in the world am I to send this to?"

He drew an envelope from his pocket and held it toward her. She read the address: "Thomas Carrick, Esq."

"I was hoping that you would give me the rest of the address," said Mr. Kingstone.

She looked up with a sudden realization of his meaning.

"There is nobody," she cried, "nobody at all," and then she suddenly covered her face with her hands.

"Poor child!" said Mr. Kingstone, and Miss Redding burst into tears.

There was no one to see. The porter was absent and the kindly red curtains were all closed. Mr. Kingstone knelt down beside her, gently drawing her hands away from her face and holding them clasped between his own over Istoler's back.

"It was all very natural," he said, "and it was brave of you to confess, but if there is no one but you, dear, then it is to you I must speak. You know that I love you. Will you marry me?"

"No," sobbed Miss Redding, "no. You don't know anything about me. I tell you I am nobody—nobody at all."

"You are Patsy Carrick. You were never anything else to me. I do know you. You are risking as much as I, anyhow. Do you love me?"

"You are not nobody," said Miss Redding, the tears still rolling down her face, "and your family never would take me in."

"Then there's always the ranch," replied Mr. Kingstone, simply. "You said you would give me a Christmas gift if you had one. Don't grudge me the only thing I want."

"You have everything," sobbed Miss Redding, turning away—"everything: family, position, home and friends—and I," she laughed hysterically—"there's only me and—a cat."

"But if that is what I want, why not, dear? There's a warm spot on my hearthstone which will just suit Istoler; and for yourself, you know where your place is. I want you both badly; so badly that if you won't give yourselves to me, I shall have to learn from you and take without asking."

He bent toward her, half folding her in his arms, then drew back and dropped her hand, kneeling before her with both of his own outstretched.

"Patsy, you know I love you. Dear, will you come?"

And Patsy Carrick, after one look at his face, came.

Of course it was all wildly imprudent. I have no excuse to offer for any of it, except that as theirs was a Christmas story, it could only end one way.

It came hardest on me, for I was Jim Kingstone's partner, and it was quite true that I could never spare him. When he appeared on the ranch on New Year's morning with a wife in one hand and a cat in the other, I felt that I could never forgive either of the three. But I did, as I hope you will. Jim bought out my share in the ranch, and I forgave them, sitting on what was then their hearthstone, and hearing the whole story very much as I have told it to you. There was never a great deal of reticence about Jim.

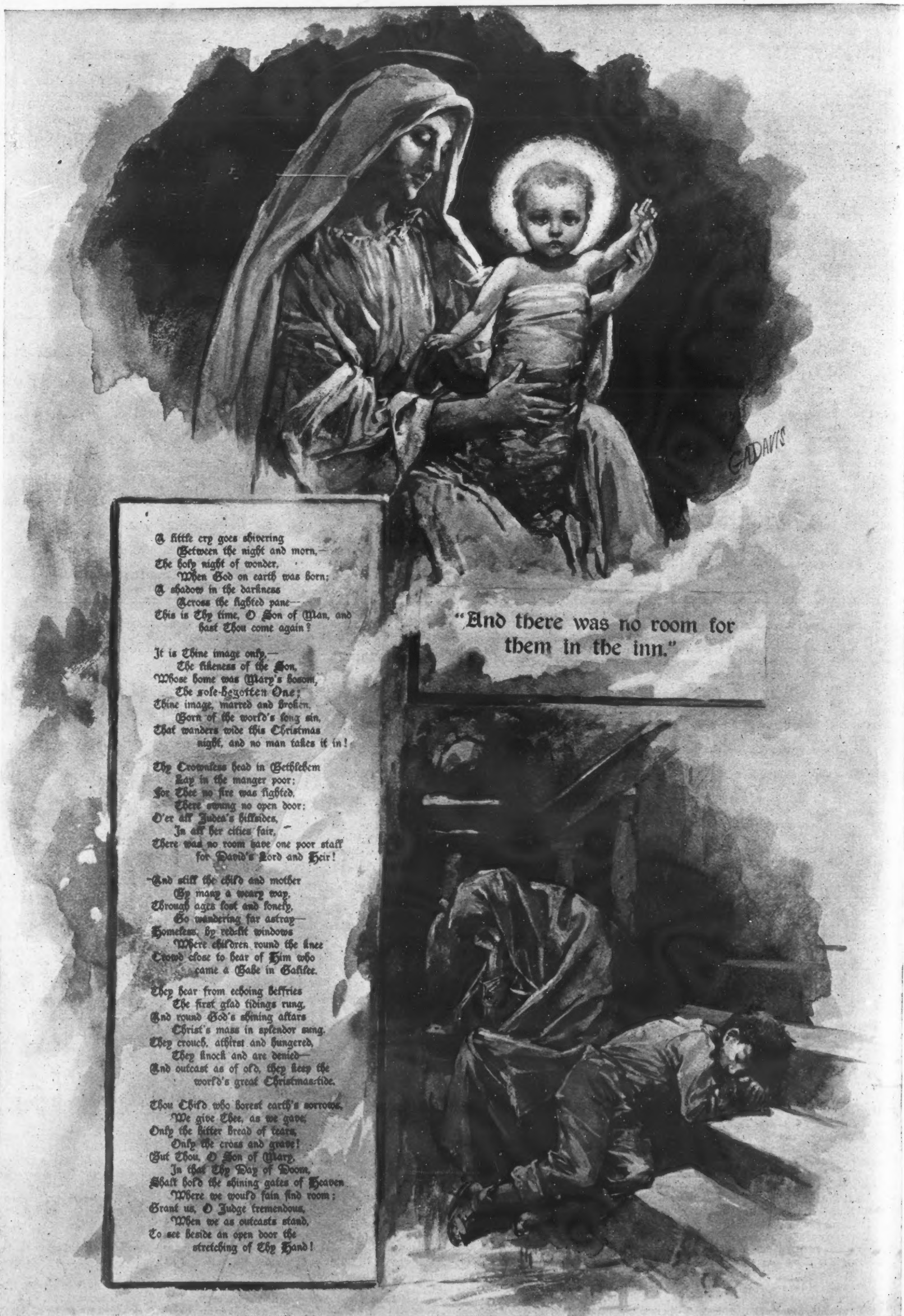
I even found myself stroking Istoler as she sat on the hearthstone, the picture of an idolized cat. They none of them met their deserts.

My tale has no moral. I hear from them occasionally, and they are as happy as they have no business to be.

My last communication came from the ranch on this Christmas morning, in the shape of a yellow telegraphic dispatch—necessarily laconic, but Jim Kingstone distinctly, even through the wire—

"Congratulations—Istoler's nose is broken. It's a boy."





A little cry goes shivering  
Between the night and morn,—  
The holy night of wonder,  
When God on earth was born;  
A shadow in the darkness  
Across the lighted pane—  
This is Thy time, O Son of Man, and  
hast Thou come again?

It is Thine image only,—  
The likeness of the Son,  
Whose home was Mary's bosom,  
The sole-begotten One;  
Thine image, marred and broken,  
Born of the world's long sin,  
That wanders wide this Christmas  
night, and no man takes it in!

Thy Crownless head in Bethlehem  
Lay in the manger poor;  
For Thee no fire was lighted,  
There swung no open door;  
O'er all Judea's hill-sides,  
In all her cities fair,  
There was no room save one poor stall  
for David's Lord and Heir!

And still the child and mother  
By many a weary way,  
Through ages lost and lonely,  
So wandering far astray—  
Homeless, by red-lit windows  
Where children round the knee  
Crowd close to hear of Him who  
came a Babe in Bethlee.

They hear from echoing bell-towers  
The first glad tidings rung,  
And round God's shining altars  
Christ's mass in splendor sung.  
They crouch, affrighted and hungered,  
They knock and are denied—  
And outcast as of old, they keep the  
world's great Christmas-tide.

Thou Child who borest earth's sorrows,  
We give Thee, as we gave,  
Only the bitter bread of tears,  
Only the cross and grave!  
But Thou, O Son of Mary,  
In that Thy Day of Doom,  
Shalt hold the shining gates of Heaven  
Where we would fain find room;  
Grant us, O Judge tremendous,  
When we as outcasts stand,  
To see beside an open door the  
stretching of Thy Hand!

"And there was no room for  
them in the inn."





PLAYFUL KITTENS—FROM THE PAINTING BY MR. J. H. DOUTHETT, IN POSSESSION OF THE JESSE H. HARRIS COMPANY.





MARJORY wanted to have a house-party for the Christmas holidays, because it was "so English." Nan would have been charmed with the idea if it hadn't been for that last clause; that was the red rag to the bull, and she charged valiantly down upon it.

"English! I thought Christmas was a peculiarly German festival," she snorted, contemptuously.

"Oh, no, dear," Marjory replied, with her most superior married-sister air. "Don't you remember about the Druids, and their golden axes and yule-logs and mistletoe, and all that?"

"Can't say I do," retorted Nan, huffily; "it was rather before my time, I guess."

Nan and Marjory were sisters, orphans; Nan's home was with Marjory and Jock—or Maggie and John, as she persisted in calling them. They were people of some means, considerable culture, and not a little good breeding. They had been married six or seven years, and had two pretty children who were the pride of Marjory's eyes and the delight of Nan's life; but of late, when Nan came home from school for good this year, she had pronounced the atmosphere of the handsome home out Shortridge way unendurable. She had made observations of a similar nature in the course of every vacation that she had spent there in the past three years; but, as she elegantly phrased it, she could "stand it better in broken doses," and then, there was no denying that matters were growing distinctly worse as time went on.

John and Maggie had spent six months in England the year before. Up to that time they had been only mildly Anglo-maniac; but from this trip they returned calling each other Jock and Marjory, to make the house, as Nan said, "unendurably, nauseously English." Nan made no distinctions; she asserted that she hated everything English, and she tried her best to make that assertion good. Despite the fact that she had all a healthy girl's delight in a stinging gallop after nothing in particular, she affected to despise, and avoided, the anise-seed-bag hunts and paper chases the neighborhood indulged in, tried to prefer croquet to tennis, and wore Paris costumes and shoes with French heels.

Such being her unregenerate state of mind, it is scant wonder that Marjory's pet project of a London season for her, which she now proceeded for the fiftieth time to discuss, met with no favor. Nan was really a beauty, in her own perverse, contradictory way. "Just the style to take with English people," Marjory averred, and if they could manage an acquaintance with the right people, and an introduction into the right set, there was nothing in the way of her being a great success in London.

When this point was reached Nan spoiled everything by remarking, "I'm not going over there to be coached and pushed and advertised like an actress; to have my points discussed, like a fast horse, and to have people speculating as to how much money I've got—they seem to think a good-looking American girl's sole reason for being is to have money and want to buy a lord with it. You know I've so little they'd think it the rankest presumption for me to come buying with it, if the amount were known—when I wouldn't take one of the creatures as a gracious gift. No, dear, I shall go to London on my wedding journey; not sooner."

The sight of Marjory's face at this speech restored Nan's good-humor, it was so very blank and queer. "No," she replied to the look, "I haven't asked him yet, nor even picked him out; but when I do, rest assured he shall be an American—and not," she added, under her breath, "a wretched hybrid Anglo-maniac, either."

"That's just it, Nannie," remonstrated her sister; "you've never met a typical English gentleman, and you've no idea what they're like. You ought to see something of people before you make your choice."

"I've seen some things that posed as pretty fair imitations of 'em," said Nan, hotly, "and I didn't fancy 'em." Then, in reply to her sister's shocked, hurt exclamation, she added, "Of course I don't mean John by that. Don't let's talk about it, anyhow; it always sets us to quarreling. Let's talk about the house-party. I shall think it a lovely plan if only you won't call it English."

"But I thought it would be," said Marjory, bewildered. "I thought we could have a Christmas hunt, and walk over in the evening, Christmas Eve, to services in the church. It's such

a dear little Gothic church, and we could help decorate it, as they do in all the English stories and novels, and I do hope there'll be snow. Maybe"—meditatively—"we could have waits. I think we could. The house isn't large, and we could only have the Ballard girls and their mother and some men; but I think it could be made very En—nice, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said Nan, pacifically. "What men, for instance?"

"That's just it," said Marjory—Marjory's main ideas always had a way of coming out as a sort of conversational postscript. "I am particular, rather, about what we do, because Jock has asked a very pleasant Englishman out for the week. I want to show him we can have things nice in America, too. I'm very anxious that he should be pleased with you, dear; no knowing what he can do for us when we go for your London season. O, Nannie, I do hope you're not going to be horrid to him just for pure meanness. I do think you can be more horrid to a man when you try than any really nice girl I know. You treat young Tom more like a dog than a human creature, half the time."

"I don't!" blazed Nan,—"or, if I do, he knows I don't mean it. He knows I'm fond of him."

"Oh, well," said Marjory, disapprovingly, "I merely used him as an illustration. I'm sure I don't want you to like that young person 'more than reason.' Of course he's Jock's partner, and all very well in his way; but it's a very aggressive and—well—American way. Don't look so 'frabjous' about it, please, and do promise to be nice to Jock's nice Englishman."

"Where did John pick him up?" said Nan, suspiciously; "on the steamer or the cars?"

Marjory flushed, the accusation came so near truth, and answered, evasively, that he "met him last week in New York." The facts in the case were these: John Martin, of the firm of Curtis, Son & Martin, leather merchants, of which Thomas Curtis, Sr., was Curtis, young Tom son, and himself Martin, had met on the train from his home to New York a gentleman whom he at first took to be an American of English proclivities, like himself. The party in question taking him, as was natural from his appearance, for an Englishman, greeted him as a countryman, and they fell into conversation. John found that the man was in fact an Englishman, and apparently a person of standing. Now, had he been an American and never so charming, John Martin would as soon have thought of deeding him a portion of his property as asking him to his house on so slight an acquaintance; but as matters were, an invitation for the holiday week had been given and conditionally accepted before they parted. A note had been received later from the Englishman confirming the acceptance, and it was something in this epistle which had aroused gentle Marjory to unwonted decision of speech and manner.

Poor Marjory! She never could keep anything from Nan, even when she felt it would be most expedient to do so, and she presently brought out the sacred communication and explained the deductions they had drawn from it. The note was a short one, bluffy English, written on the letter head and inclosed in the envelope of a not too expensive down-town hotel. It read:

"Will be down Tuesday, if that will suit. Thanks.  
Yours,  
BUCCUPP."

Marjory handled it gently and put her slender forefinger on the signature in a sort of beatific trance.

"Don't you see, dear, he has a title? A plain mister would sign with his initials or Christian name. He's evidently not using it over here, for Jock is sure he said Mr. Buccupp in giving his name, and we'll call him so; but we are confident he would never have signed his note that way unless he had a title."

"Buccupp," said Nan, with an irreverent giggle. "Buck-up—sounds rather Texasish, don't you think? Why doesn't he use his old title, if he's got one?"

"I don't know," said Marjory, absently, "but I'm rather glad he doesn't. It would be nice to have a Sir Somebody staying at your house; but then," with that charming disposition so prevalent in society to keep all the good things to one's self and away from one's neighbors, "if the others knew of it they'd be tagging here and inviting and running after him, till I would have no peace."

Nan went up-stairs after all the details for holiday week had been arranged, and paused at the big window on the landing to look out absently over the sound. Her eyes were full of a tender light that made them very beautiful. Was Marjory right—was she really unkind to young Tom? She had regarded him as her property, to have and to hold and to treat as she liked, since she had turned up her hair and put on long frocks. The power to make a fellow-creature perfectly happy or obviously miserable is one so new to a young girl, and withal so little understood by her, that it is small wonder she sometimes uses it mercilessly. Nan's heart smote her at some recollections called up by Marjory's words. A vision of young Tom's broad shoulders and frank eyes came before her; of his hearty, cheery ways when not reduced to desperation by her teasing;—the tender light in her eyes glowed and deepened, and she resolved to be all sweetness and render this the happiest Christmas of Tom's life. No doubt of her ability to do so crossed her mind—she even thought of something further, that sent the blood up over her pretty face, mentally negated it, laughed, and ran on up-stairs to write a note to young Tom, telling him to be sure to come out not later than Christmas Eve, as she had a special use for him then.

The waits were found, subsidized and furnished with copies of the proper nœls and carols, suitable mounts for the expected

guests were in the stable, the plum-pudding promised to be all that could be desired, and there was every indication of snow; so Marjory's heart was at peace within her, as befitted the season. Nan was so solicitous about her costumes and so quiet and demure, that she hoped everything from that quarter, and saw no indication of trouble from any other.

The Ballard girls, slight, pretty, vivacious young women of a type purely American, on whom their carefully acquired Anglicisms of manner, dress, and speech sat oddly enough, with their mother and a couple of young gentlemen so very English in their style as to have a flavor of cockney, made up a party very much after Marjory's heart, till John brought down the illustrious guest of the occasion. A tall, loose-jointed Englishman he was, something over six feet, with a delicate, pinky complexion, a mild blue eye, and a rather straggling light-brown beard. He was notably well dressed, and in the extreme of the prevailing London mode, and he had that stiff but consistently self-satisfied manner common to many Englishmen, which seems to say, as they sit bolt upright in their chairs, grasping their hats in both hands, or support themselves with an angular elbow on the chimney piece: "I may be awkward, but I'm right; you may be graceful, but you're wrong;" and though a pleasant, good-humored fellow enough among the men, and greatly given to asking questions in regard to the country that would have convulsed any but such a prejudicially admiring audience, there was little to be gotten out of him in feminine society.

There were at that Christmas hunt who found it dull. A slight damper had been cast over the whole business by the announcement of Mr. Buccupp at the meet breakfast that he did not ride and was not a hunting man at all. On learning that it was only a fox hunt—they had really one brought out from town and liberated for the occasion—and seeming a little surprised that it was not for bear or buffalo, he consented with ready good humor to try a mount and join them.

He went to the stables himself and chose his mount, a small, cobby mare, picked out because the grooms assured him she was perfectly safe, and mounted on her, with his stirrups strapped up till his knees bent nearly to her shoulders, as Nan declared, "to keep his feet from dragging," he presented anything but an inspiring appearance.

The hunt was a meet of the Bloomingdale hounds, and the entire club was out in pink. They cantered blithely along, dotting the snow with brilliant bits of color and filling the air with the pleasant sounds of laughing voices, baying dogs, and the melody of the horn. But to Nan's jaundiced eye it seemed the stupidest pastime ever invented by man. Young Tom was not down. He had been detained by something special at the office, and it was a question whether he could be down for Christmas Eve. All her philanthropic plans were crumbling to ruins.

As she rode listlessly along, the snowy scene with its bright-coated riders was blotted out; she saw the long, white road between green, waving boughs, where she and young Tom had cut loose from the hunt last October and gone racing down the pike. She saw his horse shooting ahead, and heard the laughing challenge over his shoulder, "Look out for yourself, I'm going to win!" felt again the light pressure of his arm around her and the touch of his lips just brushing her cheek as her horse swept in beside his and he took the stake; and she remembered with a contrite heart how crestfallen he had been at her unwarranted and disproportionate anger. Then she woke up to the fact that it was not October but December, and that she was plowing along over a snowy field with a party of other devoted beings after a fleeing fox and a yelping pack, and that Mr. Buccupp, on his sadly disproportioned steed, was riding close beside her, plainly bent on making himself agreeable and having answers to some of his numerous questions.

Nan was in a penitent mood, and she embraced this opportunity to do something somebody wanted her to, with ardor. She cared little for being in at the kill, and Mr. Buccupp's mare was incapable of any speed, so they soon fell out of the hunt and plodded along contentedly in the rear, getting on together amazingly well. Marjory, who had followed the line of hunt in her phaeton, looked at the two lagging figures with incredulous, delighted eyes, and when the crowd returned to lunch beamed on them with such satisfaction that Nan, had she not been buoyed up by the thought of a certain treacherous plan she had in her mind, would have been tempted to incontinently snub and dismiss her Englishman.

The programme was, for such of the party as felt disposed, to go over to the church after lunch and assist with the decorations. Nan met Marjory in the hall as the party dispersed to their rooms for change of costume. "If you have any objections, prepare to shed them now," she said, "for I'm not going over to the church, and I'm going to dress a Christmas-tree for the kiddies. I told John yesterday to send the tree and ornaments out, and I've got the presents ready. They shan't be done out of their Christmas fun because we are all so busy having a good time."

The remembrance of those two mounted figures was still warm in Marjory's mind, and she was disposed to be credulous and complying. "Just as you please," she said, beamingly; "Mrs. Ballard wouldn't mind to stay and matronize you. Hadn't you better have one of the men—Mr. Buccupp, say—stay to help you get the things on the high boughs?"

Nan flushed a little guiltily. "Young Tom will be down on the afternoon train, maybe, and he can help me; he's a handy boy," she said, indifferently. And when young Tom swung across the snowy fields and turned in at the lodge gate he saw a slender figure muffled in furs, pacing to and fro waiting for him, that caused his eyes to brighten and his pulse to go up ten beats higher to the minute.

The trimming of that Christmas-tree, alone among the spicy odors of the Christmas greenery in the little morning room, set apart for it, was a bit of Eden young Tom thinks he will never forget. Even when he is an old, old man, and has lost interest in most of the things of this world, it seems to him the scent of pine and holly will bring back Nan's rosy face as she stood perched on the step-ladder arranging ornaments he was not to be trusted with, the touch of her soft little fingers as she took things from his hands, or the sound of her voice as she exclaimed over his strength when he lifted and shifted heavy



articles for her, or his inches, when, without help from the step-ladder, he decorated the topmost branches of the tree.

In such beguilements and blandishments the brief winter afternoon passed all too quickly, and they were obliged to light the gas to finish by. When the last toy was in place and Nan called from a side table where she was working over something, "Shut your eyes and don't open your mouth, I'm going to put your present on the tree," a bold idea struck young Tom.

"Stand as you are for a moment, and don't look, and I'll put yours on first," he answered, with a queer shake in his voice.

Nan did as she was bid, and turning when she was told, beheld young Tom with one wrist tied to an upper branch of the tree, regarding her with a mixture of sheepishness and bravado. Two imps of mischief, like little sparks, leaped up in her eyes at the absurd sight. Tom noted her unpropitious expression and was very conscious of looking like a fool. "Come and get it," he said, threateningly. "It isn't polite to refuse Christmas gifts, you know."

"All right," answered Nan, with shining eyes, "but folks don't take their presents off the tree till Christmas morning. You just hang up there as comfortably as you can; I'll be down about 9 o'clock." Then she turned out the gas, and, with a soft flutter of flying skirts and feet, and the barely heard echo of a smothered laugh, she was gone.

There was a thrashing together of the laden boughs, a clinking together and shattering of fragile ornaments, as Tom tore loose, and the next moment a young man with a bit of cord tied to his wrist, and in a most unholy frame of mind, was stumbling up the dusky stairs, using language that, while uncanonical, yet had a strong ecclesiastical flavor.

When the party gathered for dinner Nan observed, with remorse and trepidation, that the worm had turned. You may wound a man's heart seventy times and seven and still be forgiven, but wound his vanity and the tale is shortened. Tom made himself as much of a general nuisance as Marjory had sighingly feared he would—indeed, he outran her expectations. He did a dozen things calculated to annoy a well-bred English party, and finally turned his attention to Mr. Buccupp, and ran him most unkindly; telling him to which tribe the President and most of our prominent men belong, and what their names signify in their native Indian tongue, with numerous other pieces of information which kept that worthy exclaiming in wondering credulity. Some of the things he said were rather clever, but they were certainly not kind, and Marjory was in misery, as Nan could see.

He finally crowned his atrocities by asking, when they all sat playing games and asking riddles, in Christmas fashion, in the big drawing-room after dinner, "Why should all Anglo-manics summer in the Polar seas?" There was a blank silence. All felt that some new and greater blasphemy was about to be uttered, when Mr. Buccupp, who really seemed to want to know, asked, "Why should they?"

"Because," said young Tom, with a fiendish laugh, "they could see there any morning, on the beach, the prints of whales."

Another deep and deadly silence followed this, broken at last by Marjory, who, in her capacity of hostess, felt something must be said. "Fancy!" she ejaculated; "how absurd!" and, by way of turning the subject, proposed some game.

But finally, when the ladies went up-stairs to bed and left the gentlemen to their smoking, the Englishman followed young Tom to the smoking-room, and, clapping him on the shoulder, said, "I've just thought out that riddle of yours—didn't catch the id-yah at first, y' know; but I've got it now—the prints of whales—the Prince of Wales. Haw! haw! Vawstly clevah, I call that. Did y' make it yourself?"

Young Tom, feeling himself, by reason of his recent deeds, a pariah among his kind, was grateful for the friendly hand of this his unconscious victim even. They chatted together, and, after the manner of friendly men, they talked shop, they exchanged business cards, and young Tom grew so hilarious that one might have doubted whether he had not taken too much wine at dinner; and, later, when a telegram was brought to Mr. Buccupp, which he announced to the company contained information that would cut short his stay and oblige him to leave in the morning, young Tom gave him some advice in regard to his adieux, which, he thought, if followed would amply revenge him for the misery of that wretched dinner hour.

The next morning, as young Tom tramped moodily up and down upon the porch, debating whether to stay and stick it out or plead business and go up to town with Buccupp (he felt he could never look upon that Christmas-tree with a composed countenance, and inclined to the latter plan), the front door softly opened and a very deprecating voice said: "Merry Christmas!" He turned to see Nan standing in the doorway. She was blushing, and had tousled her hair and her pretty morning-gown climbing after a bit of string, which she now held in her hand. She extended it toward Tom, showing the broken end, and said, in a voice scarcely above her breath, "Where's my Christmas gift?" And it was a very different Nan from any he had known that Tom gathered up in his arms in answer to the query—a sweet, loyal, lovable little woman, from whom all the mischief and teasing seemed to have dropped away.

When Nan finally began to think it was time to put her bangs and ruffles straight—in case any one else should be up at this heathenish hour—she drew away and remarked, with something of her old sauciness, "You know I'm just taking you for a change, you're so violently—Maggie says vilely—American, and I'm deadly tired of things English and imitation English—particularly the latter."

"All right," said Tom, philosophically. "I don't much care what you took me for—so you took me. We'll paint the house red, white and blue, and put a gilt eagle on the cupola, if it pleases you; it would suit me."

"I'm sorry about John and Maggie," said Nan, ruefully. "They'll hate it awfully, and you know they're all I've got—but you, dear."

When Tom had suitably rewarded that sweet conclusion he assured her that John and Maggie would be easily reconciled.

"John will announce our engagement at the little dinner party to-night, if you're willing," he said, "and Maggie won't object."

"I don't know, Tom," she answered doubtfully. "I know better than you how their hearts were set on something else, and they felt very angry about the way you made fun of Mr. Buccupp—or Lord Buccupp, as they call him among themselves."

"What?" said Tom, with a wild hurrah of laughter—and Nannie explained to him the conviction of the Martins regarding the distinguished position of their guest.

"And Maggie had ambitious visions of being sister-in-law to a 'lordship,' had she?" he inquired, when he could get his breath for laughing. "Well, now I'm sure I can make matters all right."

"Maybe you can," said Nan, hopefully, "you're so much smarter than"—she had thought to add "than I thought you were"; but with the dawn of that dutiful wifeliness which afterward sat so charmingly on her, completed her sentence with—"than I am."

And he did. John announced the engagement, and Marjory even looked pleased, in a chastened way, as Nan stood receiving good wishes, dimpling, smiling, blushing, the very image of youthful happiness. For, when Mr. Buccupp had taken his leave that morning, after cheering Marjory's heart by saying that he hoped to see herself and her sister at his place in London when they came over, and that he should do his best, there to serve them, he put into her hand, instead of the address card he would ordinarily have used, his business card, as young Tom had expressly instructed and charged him to do, assuring him it was the American custom, and the legend her astonished and horrified eyes read thereon was:

BUCCUPP,

LADIES' TAILOR, LONDON, E. C.

Tailor by Permission to Her Grace the Duchess of—

THAMUS.

AND it is said that Thamus sailed

Off islands of Ægean seas

No seaman yet had ever hailed;

No merchant yet had sailed to these,  
Phœnician or the Chersonese.

And lying all becalmed, 'tis told,

How wonderful with peace that night

Rolled out of dusk and dreamy gold

One star, whose splendor seemed to write

Laws that were mightier than might.

Like shadows on a shadow ship

The dark-haired, dark-eyed sailors lay,

When from the island seemed to slip,

Borne overhead and far away,

A voice that "Thamus!" seemed to say.

Then silence; and the languid Greek,

The lounging Cretan, watched the sky,

Or in carousal ceased to speak

And sing. Again came rolling by

The voice, and "Thamus!" in its cry.

All were awake: Tall, swarthy men

With bated breath stood listening,

Or gravely scanned the shore. And then,

Although they saw no living thing,

Again they heard the summons ring,

And "Thamus!" sounded shore and sea;

And at the third call leaped the Greek

Full facing toward the isle; and he

Cried to the voice and bade it speak

The mission, message it would seek.

"Thou shalt sail on to such a place

Among the pagan seas," it said,

"To such a land; and thou shalt face

Against it when the east is red,

And cry aloud, 'Great Pan is dead!'"

As fearful of unholy word

Their souls stood stricken with strange fear—

Then Thamus said, "Yea, I have heard.

Yet 'tis my purpose still to steer

Straight on. That land shall never hear!"

And so they sailed that night; and came

Into an unknown sea; and there

The east burnt like a sword of flame

A Cyclops forges; straight the air

Lay sick with calm; the morn was fair.

Then double dread was theirs; and dread

Was Thamus's; and he raised his hand

And shouted, "Pan! great Pan is dead!"

And all the twilight-haunted land

Cried, "Pan is dead!" from peak to strand.

They saw pale shrines and temples nod

Among the shaken trees; and pale

Wild forms of goddess and of god

Crawl forth with crumbling limbs and trail

Woe, till the dim land grew one wail.

What tripods groaned?—Serapis first

Within Canopus's temples heard

The word, and his brute granite burst

A monster bulk. Dodona stirred

And bowed huge oaks before the word,

That left them thunder-riven. Fell

On Aphaca where, marble-hewn,

They enjoin the ride. Why, I wouldn't have you miss it for

the world! We don't have warm victuals Sunday, anyway,

and I can heat my coffee and warm the pie. I'd like the quiet,

too, for I've got some business on my mind. Now you go and

get ready, for they'll want to start before sundown. If I'm

down street when you go, put the door-key under the mat and

the cats in the kitchen."

"But it don't seem right a Chris'mus," said Relief, hesitat-

ing between duty and desire.

MADISON CAWEIN.

## IN PORT.

BY PATIENCE STAPLETON.

CAPTAIN STACY was a lonely old man. He called himself a barnacle; said sometimes he was a battered hulk, tide-drifted to a shoal, yet generally he was cheerfully reminiscent. He could tell thrilling sea-stories, and sunny afternoons, down on the rotting wharves, he was likely to be surrounded by an awe-inspired circle of barefooted and freckled boys, who for the time sat in reverent quiet. There was no other captain in the forgotten coast town; its other aged seafaring men had found safe anchorage from the storms of poverty in that grandest of charities, Sailors' Snug Harbor.

Captain Stacy almost regretted his stately mansion on the hill, with its green blinds and pillared portico. He would have liked to exchange sea recollections with other tars. He referred to the absent men as fortunate, but he did not think so at heart. He said one day to Relief Stacy, his niece and housekeeper, that Snug Harbor was like seeing the lights of port after a disastrous voyage.

"I believe," said Relief, a tall, thin old maid with severe black eyebrows and Roman nose, who the neighbors said tyrannized over the captain, "that you'd rather be paupering there than here in the finest house in town, owned by the Stacy family over a century."

"A seafaring man can't settle down like a land-lubber," smiled the captain as Relief tossed her head. He thought what pride and comfort she would take in the old house when he was no more.

Sunday afternoon, after his visit to the graveyard—he never missed that unless the snow was deep—he would wander home by the shore, past the cove where the sluggish tide, weary of long travel, hissed through fields of eel-grass, lifted the thirsty seaweed clinging to the gray rocks, and reached a shining silver ribbon through the marsh to the heart of the woods. Here near a century past his father had built ships; from that mound they were launched, and if you dug deep you would find rotting chips and rusty nails.

The mystery of the ships had gone outward with the mystery of the tide—that resistless ebb and flow, the solemn march inland, the silent sweep seaward, the wherefore no man shall ever know. Over the hill, clothed now in dense growth of a new forest, wound a road, and here, drawn by oxen, came in those days spars and masts from the depths of the woods. What better fate for a noble tree than to live again on a fine, brave ship, to cross wide seas, and feel again the stirring winter gale or the soft, languorous summer breeze from tropic seas? Again to stand a spire to heaven, branched by spars and leaved with clinging cordage; to feel once more the thrill of life, the dragging of the wind-curved sail, so like the days when fettered leaves glinted in the sun, and the whole green mass, by one air stirred, rose in protest and whispered revolt. What nobler rest than depth of ocean? Better than to fall, and lie and rot in mossy pall and give new life to younger trees.

No sound now in the old ship-yard but the song of birds, the chatter of a squirrel, the music of the idle waves. It is hard to have outlived the prosperity of a town, to walk in ghostly ways with those who are no more. To remember a ship at every wharf, and the hum of commerce, the murmur of men; to see now a battered coasting schooner at anchor, dories rocking in the waves, and one small, cat-rigged boat, his own *Clarinda*, the one small link that kept the captain's life bright, and made strength still in his good right arm.

In the old days a red coach and four spanking bays dashed by the captain's mansion and brought a thrill of the outer world, but now an unsightly black line crawled across the spindling bridge over the shoals, and the shrill whistle of a locomotive destroyed the quiet of the town, stopped, panting a moment, at the tiny depot, and then, with mocking screech, fled from the place that was but a way station.

One cold December day the captain, as was his custom, sat by an open fire where the hysterical pine sticks chattered and sputtered against the hard wood, until the last burned with deep red glow and comforting heat while the pine sifted in white ashes up the wide chimney. The captain dreamed and saw perchance a ship and strange ports and nights at sea in the coals, and castles where he might have dwelt. Relief came clattering across the polished floor, stepping gingerly on the rich rug brought from a far country.

"Brother Dan's folks come in from Westport," she said uneasily as the captain woke with a start and sat up erect as if he had never dozed at all; "they are going to do some trading, so they didn't stop; they wanted us to come down and spend Sunday—it's Chris'mus, you know. I told 'em you never liked to go from home that day and I hadn't no thought of leaving you. They are going to have a tree, some sort of a fancy thing, for Irene Relief, my namesake, the chubby one, and"—Relief, hesitated, her faded blue eyes looked bright and eager, her wrinkled face softened. She loved her namesake as a loveless woman will some fond young thing, and a Christmas-tree was all unknown to her.

"I'd like to go and see the children," said the captain gently. "How pleased they'd be! but I couldn't leave the old home that day. I like to stay with my ghosts. But you must go, Relief; you'd make me feel bad to stay. You need a change and a good time, and if you don't get all tired out it will do you good. You bundle up warm and fill that foot-warmer with hot water, put socks over your shoes and put on Mis' Stacy's fur cape; you'll enjoy the ride. Why, I wouldn't have you miss it for the world! We don't have warm victuals Sunday, anyway, and I can heat my coffee and warm the pie. I'd like the quiet, too, for I've got some business on my mind. Now you go and get ready, for they'll want to start before sundown. If I'm down street when you go, put the door-key under the mat and the cats in the kitchen."

"But it don't seem right a Chris'mus," said Relief, hesitat-

ing between duty and desire.





OUR CHRISTMAS VISIT TO THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.  
DRAWN BY MISS G. A. DAVIS.





IN PORT,—1. "She spread her sail like an unloosed bird and sped out across the harbor." 2. "The house, picturesque enough, was meagre protection from the weather."



"A good sailor obeys orders without question," said the captain.

Then there sounded the shrill whistle of the locomotive, and the captain hurried to the window, where, across the flats, for the tide was low, he saw the train on the bridge. "Bless my soul! four o'clock already. How time does fly! Mail time, and I must get down to the office. Here is a bill." The captain took from a worn leather wallet one of a few, a very few bills, carefully pressed. He handled it reverently, for money was scarce in the old town and the savings of long years of toil were fading fast under the captain's generous hands. "It's a little present, and you can buy something for Irene. If you go 'long now you'll have time before Dan'll's folks get back. I saw a wonderful doll down to the store—open and shet its eyes like a real baby and had a great head of hair. What things they git up nowadays! All my children had was corn-cobs and wooden dolls, or chiny-headed ones."

"You don't tell me!" quivered Relief. "Really shet its eyes? Seems like witchcraft—set the child wild! I'm dre'ful 'fraid it's gone." She trembled all over now. "I don't feel right about leaving you—real hair on its head, did you say, now? I can git my things on in a minute. Won't you step in and tell 'em to keep it for me?"

"You'll be there 'fore I do," said the captain. "I'm going down the back way. Be sure and put on Mis' Stacy's cape and those old socks of mine, and wrap up your ears." He fairly pushed the old woman from the room, and, smiling a little at her eagerness, donned his big overcoat and overshoes, his Kossuth hat and his brown mittens, and went crunching over the snow, down the hill to the one brick building in town—the custom-house and post-office. There were some little children sliding on the snow, and they called to him gayly: "Hullo, cap'n! come slide." "Old bones," he answered, and went on his way, a nautical Santa Claus, with long white beard and blue twinkling eyes. He glanced at his boat rocking in the waves, with a sailor's eye to detail. She lay easy, and everything was taut and trim aboard. He stepped into a store for his newspaper, a staid old Boston journal, whose opinions he quoted always, with stronger ones of his own. Especially when with a favorable audience he discussed the decline of American shipping, and, raising his voice to a roar, ended:

"You may cross the Atlantic a dozen times, sir, and never see our flag. Look at this town; not a ship in port, and property worth nothing."

He majestically silenced all objections or suggestions that perhaps there was nothing now in the town to load a vessel, nor any demand for foreign imports.

A bulky envelope awaited him this frosty afternoon. It was stamped with the Washington postmark, and was so large it overflowed the small letter-box. The postmistress looked over her spectacles; she did so want to inquire, the little curls each side of her head quivered with curiosity. The captain met her gaze coldly; he had no intention of gossiping with a woman or telling her his private affairs. He pocketed his letter and paper and went swiftly home to his big mansion under the century elms. He got his tea himself, but had small appetite, and afterward sat silent by the fire absorbed in the official-looking papers the envelope contained. The light from the blazing logs flickered about the quaint old room, dwelling with reverent touch on the captain's bronzed and wrinkled face, his kindly eyes, the snow of hair and beard. On the table by the lamp lay his unopened journal, the Maltese cat purred about his legs, while the black cat, curled in a chair, regarded him with solemn green eyes.

"How I'd like mother to know this," the captain said aloud. She had been sleeping these twenty years in the graveyard looking toward the west;—indeed, it seemed as if they buried the dead in that land facing the sunset, and it is a pleasant thought, surely, that the last red rays of the sun rest with warm and tender light on the lonely graves of those who watched its course so many long and patient years. Never a bit of good news but the captain's thoughts went back to her, the sharer of all his hopes and joys for many years. The old clock, taller than the captain, older by half a century, ticked the moments monotonously away. On the glistening snow the moon traced marvelous broodery through the branches of the elms. All the waves in the harbor seemed alive with joy; beneath the moon a shining pathway lay like the wake of a phantom ship. The captain looked wistfully on the sparkling night.

"A fair wind and ebb tide, a chance in a hundred," he sighed. "He must be poor, dreadful poor, and what a fortune to him! A sum enough to live on and a thousand dollars in money; every month, sure as the time comes, something more than he could earn. What a surprise to old Jimmy!—for I've never writ him, fearing I couldn't get it. If I'd failed it would have gone hard with him. He's older than me by ten year, but he never would own it."

He paced the room, stopping now and then to look over the white fields to the harbor. The fire died to red coals; outside the wind whispered to the shuddering elms. A moment later and the room was empty; stealthily, like a thief in the night, a dark figure went from the old porch, closed the door, and looking back as one might in saying farewell, hastened down the hill. The cats came creeping in from the hall where they had followed, and each with weird wail settled in its cushion. The fiery coals faded to gray ashes, the cold crept in, and the old clock solemnly counted the seconds.

"Each one a soul born, born, born,  
Each one a soul gone, gone, gone."

Timid mice crept from holes in the wainscoting and pattered over the shining floor. The old house breathed with memories, haunted by the passing of many lives, the footsteps and laughter of little children.

The captain rowed out to his boat in a dory, left that at the buoy, and set the *Clarinda* free. She spread her sail like an unjosed bird and sped out across the harbor. Never a soul saw or knew; the town was all asleep, the house lights dying out one by one, like waning stars in the dawn. Where the tide rushed through the narrows into the river the current boiled and bubbled, and the *Clarinda* passed in a wake of foam that hissed high on her bow. She bent to the stronger breeze as she swept into the majestic current of the river, and steadily on,

past sloping shores where the meadows shone green in summer time, past forests palled with moss, old pines and firs that harbored in fair days hoarse crows and hawks and swift mackerel gulls with their pearly tints, so like the fog they seem born of it. From farm-house windows wavering gleams of light shot across the water, honest watch-dogs barked, and a skulking fox—a glimpse of red on the dense white—stopped a scared second to watch the sail flit past. Toppling buoys danced merrily in the stream, a hidden reef showed here and there its stick and barrel—well the captain read the story of the river printed in such signs. Once a deep bark brought a host of echoes in some echo-land like the pack of a ghostly huntsman. Now the river widened, and between two starlit worlds floated the lonely boat. The night was soundless, and bitterly, pitilessly cold. The North star shone bright as the one bright star that led the Magi in centuries past.

Strange and awesome in the silence there came the sound of a human voice in loud command. Had a fog veiled the river in its shroud of mist the listener would have sworn a full-rigged ship was sailing past; he could have fancied from those ringing tones there was the rattle of cordage, the sweep of sails, even the sound of sailors answering orders and their busy footsteps on the deck. In delirium brought on by the cold the captain thought himself aboard a ship long rotting on some far coast; he lived the past again and saw the masts and sails, the faces of his men, and felt, as he spoke, the willing obedience and swift service of his old mariners who had sailed with him many a voyage. He called by name and seemed to see men who had been dead these thirty years. Yet if it were possible they would have come to serve him in his awful need, trooping forth from the mould and earth with a cheery "Aye, aye, sir." From ocean depths, from foreign church-yards, from the graves of the unrecorded and forgotten.

His hand on the tiller, the captain still guided his craft along the rocky way, steered by each buoy and ledge, and on until ahead gleamed a golden eye that came and went and swung a glittering line across the river. Straight from the nearing ocean came great crested billows, tossing the boat like an egg-shell, lifting her high and burying her deep in hollows. Steadily she went on her course.

Across the river from the golden eye, Hendricks Head light-house, dwelt the captain's old cook. He was eighty years old, his wife near his age, and the hut they owned had been his father's. How cold it was on that wintry coast the folk along shore knew.

The house, picturesque enough to passers-by, was meagre protection from the weather, and their wretched food but served to keep the life in them. Along that bleak shore men and women live to a ripe old age, despite bitterest poverty.

What stories the captain used to tell of Jimmy Jones, this old cook: "Sailed with me twenty years; always willing and obliging; best cook I ever had. His plum duff was a marvel. There was little enough to work with in those days; no canned meats at all." Reminiscent, the captain would tell to his admiring audience of small and freckled boys, of a mutiny, the only one he ever experienced. Not his own crew, hired around the Maine village, but a pick-up lot brought aboard drunk in Boston. He had no firearm, never carried one, and things looked pretty black with only the mate on his side and the men all gathered in the fore-castle, when Jimmy came cautiously to the cabin.

"Cap'n," he said, "I've a drug in my chist as will lay all of 'em out cold. Gimme the word and I'll pizen every mother's son of 'em."

"An' he done it?" from the captain's breathless audience.

"No. I reasoned with 'em, put some in irons, but Jimmy was a bit too zealous and I was some afraid of him myself after that."

Old Jimmy was feeble this winter. The cold had got in his bones and chained him to his chair; the summer had been damp and chilly, fish scarce, and now the short-lobster law was in force, his lobster-pots brought him poor returns. It fretted him to see his wife gathering drift along the shore; that had been his work, and she was but feeble, too. He never grumbled, but she did; tall, lean and wrinkled, she might have been hanged for a witch in old Salem days.

They slept on a feather bed guarded by four tall posts. On one hung the woman's gown, a queer silhouette of herself. The fire was out in the stove, and through the frosted panes the moonlight, wan and weird, crept shuddering to the floor. Every beam in the house creaked and strained, so the sound of footsteps over the crisp snow woke neither of them. But suddenly a sounding rap and a voice calling stirred the old man. Forgetting his weight of years he sprang to his feet and thrust on his clothes, calling:

"Aye, aye, sir."

"What's the matter?" asked the old woman shrilly. "There ain't no one."

"I heer'd the cap'n calling," cried Jimmy running to the door.

"He's crazy; the cap'n's safe abed way up town," she said sitting up in bed and listening.

"Why, cap'n?" from Jimmy, eager and incredulous, "tain't you?"

And the answer, oddly feeble: "Aye, Jimmy, fetched her through—forty years a captain—never lost a ship yet, if I did crawl in through the cabin window—master at nineteen. Tom's on watch, the danger's all over, so I'll turn in a bit."

The old woman, who had hastily dressed, came out with a lamp and kindled the fire and made hot tea—all they had. Jimmy on his knees rubbed the captain's chilled hands, shapely yet, despite long years of toil.

"He's gone out of his head," she whispered as the captain mumbled in his beard, his bright eyes straight before him. "I'll git him to bed; he'll warm quicker there."

"Cap'n, look up," quavered the old cook. "It was madness to come down here. What made ye do it? I'll run down an' make the boat fast ef that's worryin' ye."

"Tom's on watch, I told you," said the captain fretfully. "It's all right. That's my way—no loose ends, all ship-shape."

"Allus, cap'n."

"Remember the clipper *Lucretia*? That was a ship—shortest passage but one ever made in a ship across the Atlantic."

"Aye, cap'n, an' now drink yer tea, it will heaten ye; ye'll come to yerself arter a bit."

"The bed is warmed," said the old woman; "you bring him. He'll git better there."

The captain staggered to his feet. "Yes, I'll turn in; danger's over. Call me if I'm needed."

"I'll make sure," she answered, hanging up his coat with reverent hand and laying on the table his Kossuth hat and clumsy mittens. "Whatever brought that poor soul here this night," she muttered, "he was allus good to Jimmy. Mebbe (and her lips quivered) mebbe—but it couldn't be; he spoke on it onct last summer—them papers, the pension—my boy's that was killed in the war." She ran to the bedroom. "Cap'n, you hain't—hain't good news of the pension?"

He pointed one feeble hand, a gleam of recollection in his eyes.

"In the pocket of my coat—be careful of them. Go to an honest lawyer; there's enough to keep you in comfort." Then louder, half raising himself: "Who'll volunteer? What salvage there is the crew shares. It's a water-logged brig. If there's life there, I wouldn't leave a dog adrift in mid-ocean. A deserted bark at sea, boys; think if you were in it and I passed you by."

The two old people pored over the papers—a gift from the grave of their dead boy sleeping in the South under the magnolias. Just as hunger and pauperism, the town poor-house, stared them in the face this had come, a gift as from Heaven.

"Cap'n," sobbed the old woman, "I can't find words to thank ye."

"Nor I," sobbed old Jimmy. "God bless ye and make ye well!"

The captain was past hearing, heeding. Under the snow of his beard his breath came labored and slow.

"Christmas Day, Jimmy—lonesome at sea," he muttered, faintly. "Wonder where mother is—what she is doing—and the children, they'll miss me to-day. Let's be merry and make the best of it; a good dinner for the cabin and galley. Give the crew pudding. Don't stint the spices and raisins, you rascal. Give 'em plum duff. Give 'em, too, my good wishes for them and the folks at home."

"Aye, cap'n," cried the old man, staggering to the bed, "it 'twas but the old days over again!"

A silence, a shuddering sigh, and on Christmas morning, after bringing tidings of comfort and joy to a desolate hearth, the life-ship of Captain Stacy sailed into port.

#### THE HOLY DAWN.

O God, the Dawn is coming up the east!

White as a virgin waking from a dream,

Or a chaste lily on a crystal stream;

Sweet as the June air when the rain has ceased,

Sweet as a love that you had hoped for least;

Dear as remembered kisses that are gone,

Pure as a cloistered nun,—dear God, the Dawn—

The holy Dawn—is coming up the east!

Now, every vein, run full with sacred fire!

And, heart, beat fast and thrill in ecstasy!

And, soul, leap up in exquisite desire!

And throb with passion, every pulse of me!

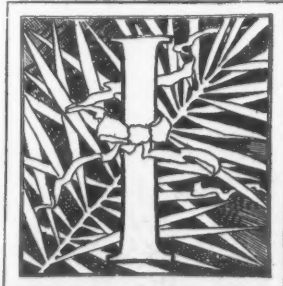
Peace to each man, O Christ, and each dumb beast,—

Thy holy Dawn is coming up the east!

ELLA HIGGINSON.

## "IN A GAS TOWN."

BY EVA WILDER MCGLOSSON.



I was not quite dark, but gas standards along the streets were beginning to flare, the gaunt poles transformed into gigantic torches through the simple magic of an oil-cup borne on a long handle by a small boy.

Mrs. Rivers stared after him with a sense of aching stupidity. His figure presented itself in a weird illumination, all startling black

and white. His gait, a rapid dog-trot, took an unearthly sort of buoyancy from the blazing wick he carried.

In the exaggerated lights and shadows he looked like an unholy spirit frisking along the ground, striking fever and pestilence upon the dark cheek of the sleeping earth.

"I can't tell her," said Mrs. Rivers in a kind of gasp. "I, I just can't!"

Her father, James Clinkenbeard, a small, meek old man, whose skin and scant hair bore out the faint coppers tints of his clothes, opened and shut his lips helplessly. Then he said, "Well, some one'll hev to, Is'bel. Thing is, your ma's always been so wrapped up in Jason—I d' know. She'll take it hard. She's always figured on his stayin' single till he was pretty well on. He's only twenty-one, and that Wells girl! I d' know! your ma'll never git over it."

He looked miserably toward home, a stern-visaged, white frame-house, set just across the yard from his daughter's green cottage. Both were well-kept dwellings with heavy lilac-bushes and low-branching fruit-trees about them. Across the narrow street, however, rather a poor lot of new, one-storied houses stood, their unfenced garden spaces and shutterless windows giving them a blank, browbeaten expression.

They had been hurriedly put up since the Indiana town discovered itself to be in the gas-belt and rose to the event in a wild burst of enterprise.



The Clinkenbeard house belonged to the decent period when the adjacent country had been a sweep of green fields, unsurveyed and undivided into town lots; when chimneys had smoked cheerfully of mornings and night was a respectable darkness, not yet polluted with glaring arches of flame.

"It'll kill her," said Is'bel, putting out a foot to keep the baby from crawling over the door-sill. "Jason deserves the very worst can happen to him, if he is the only brother I got!—marrying into a family like those Wellses! Why, I never knew he was on more than speaking terms with Lilly—designing thing she is!"

Her father considerably transferred his weight to the foot with which he had been abstractedly turning a hole in the turf at Is'bel's doorstep. He had an air of uncertainty.

"Well, I d' know," he demurred—"of course they're awful mean stock, the Wellses, but I never heard a word agin Lilly. She's growed up real sweet-appearin'. 'Minds me of a little yeller-headed mustard-blossom stickin' its head up out of a bank of weeds."

"Well, I will! Pa, you beat everything; you do so! She's got a pile of real sandy hair, kinkey as wool. If you call that pretty—I must say I didn't look to see you take up for her."

Then, seeing a loophole of escape for herself, she added severely, "I wouldn't wonder if you found it easier to tell ma than I could. You seem to feel real kind toward Lilly. I don't believe but what my tongue would fail me."

"You might come along over, Is'bel, and kinder be by in case—"

"Ma'd rather have no one around." Whereupon the door shut.

Mr. Clinkenbeard, left alone in the darkness, had a moment of resentment. He felt his knees shake as he stumbled across the sere October grass. He opened the side door and slunk in. His wife, her spectacles spanning the silvery hair sparsely rippling on her brows, sat in a splint rocker by the walnut centre-table, a red-plush album with padded covers open in her lap.

She barely looked up. A little contented smile touched her faded lips. She was a pretty old woman, and in the lamp-light, with the smile on her face, some subtle afterglow of youth brightened about her.

"I was just thinkin'," she said, "how it'd do to hev this tintage of Jason enlarged? There was a man around to-day offered to do it real reasonable. gilt frame throwed in. We got a good many of Jason, but I always kind of liked the expression in this one—sort of teasin', like when he used to pull Is'bel's long braids and pleg the cat. He hed on his first long pants, too—I mind the goods as well,—a shepherd's plaid, small check. They were better than anything I most ever saw—why, pa! ain't you feelin' just right?"

She got up, startled at the old man's look, as he stood by the door, confused by her unconsciousness of the news he bore. He never knew just how he told that story.

What he remembered afterward was his wife's face as she gave ear.

She neither fainted nor made any outcry. The delicately mottled pink in her soft old cheeks seemed as if blotted out by a dull grayness. Her frail figure appeared to become lax and bent. Into her blue eyes a strange hardness crept, a look like that of a marble head whose chiseled pupils are filled with cold shadows.

Her son, her one son, was lost to her forever; this was what the tale meant, though it sounded so little in the telling, and was merely to the casual ear the narrative of a runaway marriage, a story spiced with romance and to be ended in the usual way—with blessings and a few forgiving tears.

To Mrs. Clinkenbeard it was a black-fringed dirge, more desolate than a wail for the dead.

Indeed, it seemed to her that she could have better borne the tidings of her boy's death. She had in it a sense of unreality. His supper was out there in the oven; he was a little late, posting up the books in the nail-factory. He would be in presently. She could catch the smell of coffee. The pot must be set back.

What was this hideous thing she had just heard? She knew the Wells people, in such sort as respectable folk who clean house twice a year and go to church of Sundays, may know the quarrelsome dwellers in a ramshackle hovel round the corner.

Miserably poor and shiftless they had been—the father given to his cups, the mother a limp, slatternly woman who beat her brood of children and wept over her troubles, except when she bickered over the fence with the people next door.

When the pair died the boys had got work in the factories which the gas brought to the town.

Lilly, the only girl, went to live with her oldest brother, who had married and was maintaining a *ménage* almost as thrifless as that of his parents.

The girl had run wild. Mrs. Clinkenbeard had a sharp memory of her as a thin child with heaps of strangely yellow hair, an impudent bit of a face, and a general reputation for being "sassy."

Once, as Is'bel passed by the Wells house on her way to school, prim in starched gingham, her sleek hair tied with ribbon, a little lean figure, unpicturesque in its ragged petticoat, had darted out, jerked the pink streamers loose, and sprung back laughing shrilly, while Is'bel plucked at her braided locks, crying out.

This came back to Mrs. Clinkenbeard, unchastened by any sense of the envy and wretchedness which lay in that childish outburst of spite.

That her boy should have been beguiled into an instant's fancy for a girl of breeding so alien to his own seemed to Mrs. Clinkenbeard a subversion of judgment.

There was no doubt, of course, that he had been beguiled. In his mother's opinion there was nothing even in so material a matter as Lilly Wells's looks to commend her.

There might, indeed, be a taste perverted enough to fancy pallor and glooming eyes and a dazzle of culpably bright hair, but Mrs. Clinkenbeard had the modern æsthetic anæmia, and cherished ideals of a chaste and bloodless nature.

She admired the sort of beauty which has no strangeness in its proportion, the style which is so familiar in its roundness and freshness that the eye scarcely takes in a sense of its harmony.

What Mrs. Clinkenbeard said to her husband was simply this:

"We got Is'bel. She's always ben a good girl. I always put Jason before her. But I'll try to make it up to her now. She's all the child we got."

Clinkenbeard had never had any illusions about his son. Jason was to him a young man of ordinary parts, with no suggestions of a halo about his chestnut locks. He had been pushed to the rear ever since the blustering boy-baby came to win away the wife's attention. But Clinkenbeard, wrestling with a vague feeling of injustice toward the usurper, raised a feeble quaver.

"Well, now, ma, if Jason comes and beats around and gits down and asks us if we won't overlook things—eh?—You couldn't heart it to turn him off."

"He won't come," said Mrs. Clinkenbeard in a strained voice. She knew him. "He'll wait for me to take the first step. It ain't fer them that falls to ask to be lifted. If they got any pride they'd rather stay down than beg to be raised. And Jason's proud. So am I. The first step'll never be taken."

The year groped darkly down into the dun valley of November. In the town houses stoves sputtered with gas, their little glass doors glazed with flickering blue. The Clinkenbeard dwelling wore a forbidding look. The front blinds were always down, and winter flowers no longer brightened the window-ledges.

Sometimes, when Is'bel brought her baby in, a little fat hand patted the panes below the curtain edge, and at such times Mrs. Clinkenbeard, looking in from the back room, would pale to remember other little hands which had once left silvery marks upon the glass.

A neighbor woman dropping in, one day late in the year, remarked the absence of Mrs. Clinkenbeard's flower-pots.

"Your geranyums used to give a body real comfort, bloomin' in snow time," she said. Mrs. Clinkenbeard, knitting a baby's sock, drew her lips. She looked bony and colorless. All her old prettiness was bleached and faded, and her hair at the temples seemed as if freshly powdered.

"They kind of sickened me, and I put 'em in the cellar," she said. The other woman, glad of an approach to her neighbor's troubles, thrust in the wedge of a sympathetic sigh.

"I know jest how you feel," she declared, filled with an expansive wish to communicate her ideas. "I suppose you know Jason's gone to housekeepin'?"

"I don't know nothing about Jason."

"I don't blame you one bit in the world! Yes'm, he's paid down on one of them new homestead houses out by the new gas-well. They sell 'em real reasonable. Jason's is painted two shades of lilick—real tasty. It's like across-lots from where Lilly's brother's folks lives. 'Tain't none o' my business, but if I was Jason I'd of wanted to git further off from 'um. Lilly's sister-in-law's a triflin' housekeeper as ever lived—spends her time hangin' round the neighbors. Lilly ought to be kep' from her kin. She's growed up real well favored, Lilly has, tho' they say she don't know as much about cookin' an' doin' as a last-year's robin's nest."

"I don't know nothing about her."

"Well, I don't wonder at you, Mis' Clinkenbeard. They say Lilly's sister-in-law was real mean to her—poor child! A person can't blame her for marryin' a nice man when she got the chance. Girls hes to marry—there's nothin' else for 'em unless they work in the mills. And men—looks like they git more and more scary of marryin' every year. It takes a smart girl to bring 'em round!"

Mrs. Clinkenbeard knitted on austere, and the other, feeling the moral atmosphere becoming chill, rose to go.

"What's your hurry?" asked Mrs. Clinkenbeard, abstractedly repeating the usual formula.

"Oh, I got to be goin'! I laid out to measure out my black cake before night. Goin' to do any Christmas bakin'?"

"I guess we'll make out to hev something to eat. 'Twon't be no different from other days. When folks hes been stricken down, feasin' and frolickin' don't look just right."

As she spoke she stared through the opening door at a desolate prospect of gray sky, marked to the west with a gibbet-like structure of unweathered pine, the scaffolding of a gas-well in process of drilling. It was dull and cheerless—a flat, colorless reach of wintry earth—the town houses huddling together, with breathless chimneys, the distance speared with a steep dark roof or the smoke-stack of an outlying factory.

It was not a Christmas prospect, yet in a week or so the time of holly and mistletoe, of frost and ice, and wide-spreading inner cheer would be upon all such wenders in the human way as care to be glad themselves and to make their fellows glad.

Mrs. Clinkenbeard remembered what it had meant to her when Jason and Is'bel were children. Somehow, Jason's figure rose in clearest outline, parading round in his little night-gown of a Christmas morning, blowing a gospel of joy on his new tin horn.

Something moved her to take out the paper in which his curls were folded; the long, brown curls she had shed such tears upon when he grew too big a boy to wear them hanging on his shoulders. They were fading a little, and had that indefinite, faint, flowery smell which comes of lying among old linens. Mrs. Clinkenbeard cried over them again—not such tears as one drops upon a lock of hair whose fellows lie in darkness, but tears hot, bitter, and resentful.

He was happy, though he had broken his mother's heart. Happy with the rudely-reared girl he had taken to wife, whose golden head no doubt touched all stinging remembrances from the heart it rested on.

It was coming on for night. Mr. Clinkenbeard had gone over to Is'bel's. His wife sat by the kitchen stove listening to the gas which muttered sullenly, showing its blue fangs between the grate-bars, and acting altogether as if it resented being freed from the great earth's bosom, only to be thus ignobly put in an iron box. At her feet the brass mixer gleamed with yellow.

Out the back window a great blotch of carmine dashed the black sky like a fearful sign and portent, though the accustomed eye easily resolved it into an isolated gas-pole at the edge of a field. It seemed to disturb the repose which comes

with nightfall, throbbing hotly, like a troubled heart, and making the stark earth twitch.

Mrs. Clinkenbeard sat staring tearlessly down at her empty hands, bleached and wrinkled as two poor old winter-leaves. It was very still. And then suddenly there was a step on the back porch. The door opened.

"Is the baby gone to sleep already, pa?" she asked. Then very quickly it seemed to her as if something sharp had caught at her heart.

A tall figure cast itself on the floor beside her, its brown head falling heavily on her knees. It was Jason.

"Mother!" he sobbed out, in the half-real tones which emotion gives.

Mrs. Clinkenbeard did not touch him. She appeared to shrink back in her chair. A moment passed. He lifted his eyes, searching her face.

"You got your wife, Jason," she breathed; "she'll hev to do you. I've said all I got to say."

Jason's shoulder twitched. He had a good-looking face, the lips sensitive, the chin of a capricious turn.

"Wife!" he said. "I've left her, mother."

A wild thrill vibrated through Mrs. Clinkenbeard's frame. It seemed to burst about her heart in a hundred little threads of fire. Her breath shortened. He loved her best! He had come back to his mother.

Presently after, when he had got a little calm, they sat together by the hearth and it all came out, the story of his ill-advised marriage. He had been sorry for the poor, pretty girl in her brother's miserable home, a pensioner upon his grudging bounty. Stopping now and then on his way from work to speak with her at the gate, the interest had grown. She had always a little, piteous, uncertain smile for him, and one day he understood it. He heard her sister-in-law taunt Lilly with his attentions. Then he asked her to marry him. And as he realized how desperate a proceeding it was and how hopeless it would be to dream of his mother's consent, they had been married out of hand.

"You pitied her, Jason,—that was it! You were always just that kind-hearted." Jason flushed a little.

"I liked her," he said, stolidly. "I won't say I didn't." And then he went on to describe their efforts at housekeeping, and the haphazard ways of the untrained girl he had married.

It sounded absurd in the telling, but it had been a real enough trial to him that there was never anything fit to eat. When he complained Lilly had at first wept, then, instigated by her sister-in-law, grew sulky and said nothing or else "talked back."

Finally came one of those decisive moments which stamp life with a lasting mark. Shoving away the ill-cooked food one evening, Jason, flinging away from the table, said a word or two of the well-ordered home he had left. He was smarting under the continued indifference of his people; something had gone wrong in a business way that afternoon; but of this Lilly knew nothing.

She rose and looked at him palely, a proud, wild light in her big eyes.

"You may go back to that home if you want to," she said. "You are like your mother,—and she is a bad, cruel woman."

That was the end. Jason had said something bitter and short. Then he shut the door of their little cheaply-built house behind him "forever," as he said when he told of it.

"I could have stood most anything else, but when she spoke so of you, mother, my blood boiled," he declared.

Mrs. Clinkenbeard held his hand fast. He was hers again. She was glad, and yet, strangely enough, though she could not account for it at all, there was a queer sense of pain somewhere below her rapture of possession.

In the days that followed it was like the persistent after-taste of a nauseating drug which reveals itself triumphantly through the part disguise of a rare flavor. Mr. Clinkenbeard, silently observing the course of things, cautiously advanced an opinion delicately veiled in the insidious form of a question.

"Why—er—ma, hev you ever advised any with Jason about fixin' up things with his wife?—eh?"

She turned on him fiercely.

"No, I never! I ain't goin' to mix in. He found out they couldn't get along. 'Tisn't my business."

Her husband's head took a conciliating poise.

"Well, I d' know. Young folks mostly hes to hev their squabbles fore everything gits to runnin' just right, eh? Me and you, now—we had our tiffs. Well, I d' know 's I'd want to take sides."

"I take up for my own, James Clinkenbeard."

Mr. Clinkenbeard gathered himself for a desperate move.

"Him and her's one. She's his wife, if she is a Wells. Them that God —"

But he could not finish. His wife's face was too terrible. He took down his hat with a vanquished air and went over to Is'bel's.

Jason himself went about with an aspect so studiously careless and cheerful that people spoke of it.

"Looks like he's happy 'ol of his bargain," they said. Only his mother was not deceived.

"But he'll git over it," she assured herself. "He's hed an awful lesson, and I oughtn't to expect him to be like nothin' hed happened. He's got me."

Jason's wife, the temptress of the golden fleece, made no sign. Jason, giving the house a skulking glance across acids as he went to work, was unable to say if it were occupied or not. There was a sickening ache at his heart as he caught sight of the pink pump in the yard.

He had painted it himself, Lilly standing by in rapt admiration of his skill. It had been a sunny day, and she had seemed very girlish, with her hanging loop of light hair, the breezes stirring the skirt of her poorly-made calico gown.

Well, he had made a mistake, no doubt but he had made a mistake, though indeed his head felt so confused that often he scarcely knew if it lay in marrying Lilly or in leaving her.

Sometimes, as he came out from the factory into the gas-glowing twilight, he half expected to come upon a little waiting figure with an appealing face. He lay awake at night, planning several lines of conduct to pursue in case of this happening.





[Christmas Number of FRANK LESLIE'S WEEKLY.]

AFTER THE OPERA R. WEST





OPER R. WEST CLINEDINST.



He would be firm with her and tell her kindly but firmly that their marriage was a mistake, and that his present course was the wisest.

Or, he would listen to her little stumbling murmur for forgiveness and then he would—ah, well! He hardly formulated it, perhaps, but there was in him a distinct consciousness that if her face seemed pale and held tear-marks he would not be so stiff-necked as he might try to be.

But though he arranged everything with a view to meeting Lilly, he found no occasion for using his material, for Lilly did not come to meet him, and day by day a deeper line cut itself in his forehead.

His mother watched him keenly.

Christmas Eve came round, and Mrs. Clinkenbeard, with her shawl on, was waiting for Is'bel to come in. They were going down-town together for a few things which had been forgotten earlier in the day.

"Is'bel wants to see the stores lighted up," said Mrs. Clinkenbeard; "she hardly ever gets out of an evening any more." Jason mumbled something.

He was sitting tilted against the kitchen wall, making a feint of reading the paper, an inconsiderable sheet, in which the most trifling local doing was minuted with appalling faithfulness.

He held his hand up as if to shade his eyes, and now and then he bit nervously at his lip.

His mother gave him a yearning glance.

"Wouldn't you like to walk down street with me and Is'bel?"

The young man yawned.

"I'm pretty well tired out."

"I thought it'd sprighten you up, seeing the crowd."

"I guess I'm too tired to enjoy it."

Is'bel came in, buttoning her jacket.

"You ready, ma?" she said. "I don't want to leave baby long. He might get to worrying and Henry wouldn't know how to pacify him." She glanced toward her brother.

"You going with us, Jason?"

"No, I believe I won't go out to-night."

But as he spoke he looked toward the corner where his coat hung. Is'bel followed his glance.

"Maybe you're going somewheres else?" she conjectured, her mother having left the room. Jason gave her a swift, sharp look. He was not in a frame of mind to bear experimenting.

"I should think Henry and the baby'd be about all you could 'tend to," he suggested, with brotherly latitude of expression.

He expected her to resent this breach of courtesy, but she stood regarding him very quietly, and it struck him that her eyes had in them an expression new to him; a tenderness which wifehood had taught them. Jason felt ashamed. He was fond of Is'bel. He had always been proud of his sister, with her prim, dainty ways.

"I didn't mean that, Bel," he said,—"you're not mad?" Is'bel had still that abstracted gentleness in her eyes.

"No," she said; "I was just wondering how I'd feel—Christmas Eve and all—if Henry and I had quarreled and he had gone away."

The paper slipped from Jason's hand. As he stooped to pick it up a red vein showed in his brow.

"You don't understand,"—he stammered.

"I can understand this," said Is'bel, "that very few things could keep us apart—myself and Henry."

Mrs. Clinkenbeard came bustling in. As the two women stepped out Is'bel looked back. Jason had risen and stood staring at the floor, his brows knitted. Is'bel cleared her throat.

"Jason looks real bad, ma."

"Bad? I ain't noticed it."

"Seems so to me. You don't think he's brooding?"

"What's he got to brood over? He's going to do what's right. He means to keep on paying for the house. She'll hev a home." Is'bel coughed.

"Maybe he—kind of—misses her?"

"Humph! I don't see why he would. They didn't get along."

"I d' know, ma. I used to be awful set against Lilly. But lately I been thinking the poor child wasn't to blame for having no bringing up. Maybe they'd have got on all right if she'd had any one to show her how to do things. I know how it was with me when I started to housekeeping. I couldn't have managed if it hadn't been for you."

"I don't care to talk about Jason's affairs," said her mother with a lofty air of strict neutrality. "He's done what he thought best. I sha'n't mix in." She turned impatiently. "You're walking awful slow, Is'bel."

Is'bel hastened her pace, with a little start as of guilt.

They walked on, presently reaching a brilliantly illuminated part of the town. Before the court-house an arch of tossing flame made the dark sky leap with its lurid reflections. Everywhere the gas, not yet fully controllable in the pipes, burned prodigally, casting little scraps of flame upward.

This lavish outpour of light gave the two crowded squares an air of high festival, flaunting with incongruous gayety upon the slouching figures of elderly farmers, bundled in heavy overcoats, an end of wool scarf here and there showing below a grizzled chin.

Townfolk, more smartly clad, mixed in the throng. Often a word of greeting rang out:

"Howdy, Uncle Joe! You in?"

"Wa-al, I wouldn't wonder! Takes a sight of this gas to find me, though!"

"We got to get cranberries," said Is'bel. "Let's go in Brown's."

The store was thronged. Is'bel went through the press to the counter. Mrs. Clinkenbeard, distracted by the bustle, remained hard by the door, leaning against a telescoping pile of gaudily-painted wooden buckets.

It struck her with a sort of pang that nearly all the faces about were strange to her.

Stray scraps of talk floated to her ears, and she listened to them with the open interest of one whose social contact has been at few points.

Just on the opposite side of the stack of buckets a woman's voice rose persuasively, its accent gay and insistent.

"Aw, come on! It's going to be a real select crowd. I wouldn't go myself if it wasn't. I despise where the crowd's mixed. I'm going with Link Barnes, and we just as live stop by for you."

Another voice came more softly.

"I don't feel like I'd enjoy it, Marthy. It's real good of you—"

"Of course you'd enjoy it! You're a little goose. I'd let

that man see I could hold up my head for all his leaving me! I just said to ma to-day it made me right mad to see you without no speret or nothing. Livin' neighbors, a body's bound to know if you're in trouble. You come on and go to that nail-workers' ball to-morrow night!"

Mrs. Clinkenbeard, looking through a spiral of wire handles saw two young women. One was buxom-looking, with a big, good-humored face, a bright feather in her cheap hat.

The other—Mrs. Clinkenbeard drew her breath. The other was slender, even in her wool shawl, and she had a large-eyed, pallid face, about which a lot of glistening hair tumbled, all the red cheer of the thronged shop touching upon its little ripples. Her attitude betokened a sort of piteous uncertainty. The red-cheeked girl gave her an encouraging pat.

"You come on, Lil! Like as not when Jase Clinkenbeard hears you're havin' a good time, 'stead of molderin' away in that lonesome homestead house, he'll come round flyin'. He ain't any meaner'n most men. Ma says they ain't any of 'em fit to beat carpets with. We all say it's Jase's mother put him up to doin' like he done. She's got the name of being a regular old screw."

Mrs. Clinkenbeard, listening to this unembellished view of herself, had a conflicting sense of resentment and confusion.

She looked so young and sad and unmothered, in her crookedly-pinned shawl—this daughter-in-law of hers! Her broken voice stirred in Mrs. Clinkenbeard's heart as a seed quickens in the crevice of a rock.

The old woman standing there in her black garments, her mittened fingers trembling, had a moment or so of such struggling as comes to most of us once, before we give in accounts as to our moral strength and the side upon which it has been exerted. People crowding past saw only a bony figure, a stern abstraction in its hollow cheeks and set eyes.

"Old lady's likely forgot what she came in to get," some one speculated.

Then the bucket pile groaned a little as the black figure pushed past it, and as they saw who it was, the two women beyond paused in their talk with startled faces.

Lilly drew back, a scared but proud light in her eyes. The other girl tossed her head, but Mrs. Clinkenbeard did not seem to see her at all, nor any of her little defiance.

"I hope you won't go to that dance, Lilly," she said. "We look for you and Jason to eat Christmas dinner with us to-morrow."

Lilly had an unchildish dignity in her small face.

"I can't," she said, simply, and then she added in rather a stumbling fashion. "It's not my place to—to—"

Is'bel, with some little parcels in her hands, coming in search of her mother saw the two, and as she drew up, Lilly's faltering words struck upon her. There was a great kindness in Is'bel's heart—a feeling which the sense of the year's completeness accentuated almost to a universal good-will.

"Come with us, Lilly," she said, and her eyes were a little wet. "I think it's all right, dear, and that you may come and still save your pride any hurt. For Jason went to find you to-night. He must be up at the homestead house now. I hope you left the key out!"

Mrs. Clinkenbeard lifted an amazed chin.

Is'bel laughed a gay little laugh, though her lashes sparkled with a stray tear.

"I walked slow till I heard the gate shut!" she said.



BY E. B. FINDLAY.

THE charcoal camp on Tom's Mountain was almost deserted by noon on the 24th of December, 188-. Of the ten or twelve men to be found there on other days, only Dave and Jack Purkiss and Dan Stubbs were left. Three coalers had gone to the Black Corners to get drunk with relatives of both sexes. The choppers had turned their faces to the isolated farm-houses where they would to-morrow eat pig or turkey, as the fortunes of their families had prospered them. Dave and Jack were the sons of Sal Purkiss, dead some years, but once a resident of Black Corners, a settlement where public opinion on social questions is not rigid, and where pedigree is more accurately traced upon the mother's side. There was small rejoicing when either of Sal's boys was born, for in Black Corners babies are more plenty than meat, and prodigal sons far outnumber fatted calves. Dave and Jack had little coddling and many cuffs, but in spite of this they grew to be lusty boys, and when they were twelve and eleven ran away to the charcoal camp. Bill Jut said they might stay in his cabin, and so it came to pass they were charcoal-burners.

Dan Stubbs was a child of a city tenement, once the protégé of a slum missionary, later a railroad hand, sometimes a tramp, just now a charcoal-burner—always a lover of alcohol. Dave

was regarded as an epicure and a decorator—he bought sugar for his coffee instead of molasses and grew marigolds in front of his cabin in the summer time. Jack was a musician; he owned a fiddle with two strings. Dan was a conversationalist when properly stimulated.

The three men watched Joe Watson, the last departure, round the turn in the wood road.

"He seemed keen to git to see his baby," Dan said.

"Well, I ain't no famby, nor don't want none."

"Me nuther," said Jack, as sure to echo Dave's sentiments as Pine Mountain to send back the sound of the axe-strokes on Tom's.

"Reckon we kin keep Chris'mus here of we git the stuff."

"Who's a-goin to the store an' the still?"

"Well, I kin go."

"Tain't no use for you to go, Dan; you'd come back with the jug empty and yourself full."

"Thet's so, I guess," Dan answered with the conscious smile of one who receives a compliment.

"Well, it lays then atween Jack and me. Mark one o' them tickets with coal, Jack, and let's draw for it."

The drawing left the blackest ticket in Dave's hand. He

took up an empty sack, emptied the furnace company's tickets out of the tin cup and put them, with those Dan gave him, into his trousers pocket.

"Which jug will I take?" he said.

"Guess you fergit it's Chris'mus; take the biggest, the one with the blue string tied on."

Dan held the jug to his ear and shook it.

"There is some in it; gimme the cup."

Dan's eyes shone.

"What you been keepin' it hid away fer?" he said. "Here it goes. You kin even up, Dave, when you git it filled."

It was a good seven miles to the company's store at the Furnace settlement, and down the Little Gap road "a piece" made two miles more, but Dave was more likely to come back with a lean sack than an empty jug. One might do without eating at Christmas, or at least go on short rations, but without drinking! A coaler is as ignorant of any other way to keep the feast as he is why it is kept at all.

The store was full of coalers from the other camps, counting their tickets under the kerosene lamps that swung from low rafters, for it was dusky inside that gray afternoon. As Dave came through the door a man stamping his feet warm on the



dirty floor said to him that it "looked fer snow." Facts soon proved the truth of his prediction, for when Dave came out again snow was falling and had already whitened the ground.

He slung the full sack over his shoulders and walked down the road in the direction of the distillery. The road ran under a railroad trestle, and beside one of the supports of this trestle Dave had hid his jug—for the company looked with suspicion on jugs, unless the bearers thereof would exchange tickets for vinegar or molasses. Dave stooped when he reached the hollow among the stones where the jug lay, but though his eyes saw something that looked like the color of it, his hand touched something that was soft and that moved, and a small fist pushed aside the dingy gray blanket and showed a baby's face.

"By gosh!" said Dave twice, the first ejaculation expressing merely surprise, the second perplexity. "Where's my jug?" Somebody had taken it, of course, and when that person came back Dave would take the jug from the thief and restore the child to its rightful owner. He would stay and watch. He sat down on the stones, getting what shelter he could from the supports of the trestle, and looked down the road. There was no one near, and seeing that the blanket that wrapped the baby was white with snow he brushed it off and took up the child, sheltering it against his shoulders. Soon two women came toward the trestle; they were carrying a jug between them; they were Black Corner girls. Dave called to them.

"Had they seen a jug that was tied with—?" but they laughed noisily and answered that "they had seen nary a jug but this un, and that's ourn."

"Somebody left this young un and took my jug," Dave began to explain.

"Well, findin's is keepin's, on the mountain, ain't it?"

"Yis, and there is sich a sayin' as 'It's lucky to find something 'live a Chris'mus Eve,'" the other said. "Come on, Jen," and they both went stumbling and slipping down the road.

Dave sat down again. When a mountaineer has decided upon a plan of action he is apt to follow it for some time, his mind being unused to athletic performances. Dave remembered that his jug had a blue string on the handle; he would see if any one passed with a blue string on his jug. He waited for some time, then it came to him slowly that the person who took the jug would most likely take off the string. He must go back to the store—nearly a quarter of a mile—and get a jug and then go to the distillery. He would lay the baby where he had found it. Some one would soon come for it, perhaps; at any rate, it was none of his business. He found a few pieces of wood left there when the trestle was built, and hurriedly made of them a rude shelter for the child. Then he swung his sack over his shoulder and walked down the road toward the store.

There was a saying that it was lucky to find something alive on Christmas Eve. He had heard it at Black Corners when he was a boy. He had heard it on the mountain, too. He took the tickets out of his trousers pockets and counted them. A jug would cost as much as half a gallon of new whisky. He would only be able to get it half full then. They discounted tickets at the still. He looked back at the trestle. He could scarcely see it. All the air was a whirling whiteness. His shoulder where the child had lain felt cold. He retraced his steps, and when he reached the trestle he found the child was crying. He lifted it and held it in the hollow of his left arm, and with the sack on his back walked down the road toward the still, from there to take a short cut to camp. He might borrow a jug from old Hoover, who knew him, and so get all the whisky he wanted for his tickets. The snow became finer, until it seemed like powdered ice, and cut even the weather-beaten face of the charcoal-burner, and by the time he had reached the cross roads where he would turn off to the still the dusk had changed suddenly to dark, save for the whiteness of the ground. How, after all, could he carry the jug and the sack and the child? Why hadn't he left the baby under the trestle and bought a jug at the store? Somebody might be looking for the child now. There was only old Hoover and his son at the distillery; if there were any women he might leave it there. But then—it was luck to find a live thing Christmas Eve, and would he give away his luck? Once he had fired a pit in the dark of the moon, and it was twenty-eight days before it "coaled."

He looked down at the child. It had fallen asleep. It had a white little face and looked under-fed. "It favors Ira John," Dave thought. Ira John was one of Sal Purkiss's babies, that had always cried to go to Dave, and had died when the "measles was bad" at Black Corners. It was after that Dave ran away. As he looked down at the child the wind swept the ground bare where he stood. When the snow drifts on the mountain the charcoal-burner who is abroad gets inside his hut as soon as possible. Dave abandoned at once the pursuit of the jug and, turning, struck out for camp.

On and on he went, his fingers stiffening round the neck of the sack, his arm numbing; only his chest, against which he held the child, was warm. The snow beat against his face and whirled in the path before him till he grew dizzy.

"Seems like I got some outer that jug, anyhow," he thought. Still he went on, scarcely knowing how far he had come or where he was until suddenly there was his cabin not more than two hundred yards away, and as it was so near and he was so tired he might rest a little. So he sank down under a pine-tree where the snow had drifted away and left the brown needles bare. The flakes that flew about grew larger, and changed into white wings with babies' faces between them that floated into the fireplace of his hut and then melted away, and a great drowsiness possessed all his being.

When Dave had left the camp Jack threw two big hickory logs into that third of the cabin which was fireplace, lit his pipe, and, sitting down on the bench, prepared to listen to the flow of talk already beginning to come from Dan's lips—for Jack, like his kind, was more given to silence than speech; but Dan, being city born and bred, always enjoyed social functions, and being stimulated, reveled in them.

"That there looks like a Chris'mus-tree," he said, looking through the open door (a charcoal-burner's door is always open unless the wind is high) at a small cedar standing among the "ranks" of wood that waited for the boss's measuring-line. "You never hev Chris'mus-trees up on the mountain, I guess."

"Well, I dun know, there's most every kind o' blamed trees but willows, and them grows in the bottom lands."

Dan laughed.

"Chris'mus-trees don't grow, you make 'em; leastways a tree grows, o' course, but you got to make it into a Chris'mus-tree. Fust you git the tree, and then you hang all kinds o' fixin's on it—shiny balls, and gold stars, and candy, and little horses, and pop-corn and sich."

"What fer?"

"Well, jes' to tickle the children."

At this incomprehensible statement Jack stared, but said no word.

"The Germans is the greatest hands fer 'em. Seems like they will hev a Chris'mus-tree of 'tain't nothin' but a pine branch trimmed up with pop-corn and a piece er two o' candy hung on. A German and a Italian fambly lived in the room next to ourn, and Chris'mus Eve one o' the Dutch boys found a branch o' green thet 'd been throwed out from a church, and he brought it in; and his sister thet sold matches and shoe-strings, she'd earnt more nickels than ginerall, and she bought some candy and some silver balls and some little can'les, and she stuck the branch in a flower-pot that she used to hev a flower growin' in, and she dressed it up and lit the can'les. The children didn't hev no mother. Thet was the oldest girl, and she made a real nice tree."

Jack stroked Nubbin, Dave's rabbit dog, who was curled in his lap, and looked out the door. "It's a-snowin'," he said.

The drainings of the jug had got into Dan's head, and supplied more and more his tongue. "There's a great time in the city to-night—all the biggest swells a-carryin' bundles, bells a-ringin' at midnight, and s'loons handy everywhere." He got up and stood at the door. "What time'll Dave be gittin' back?" he said. "I've got a thirst on me."

"It will be late till he gits here of the snow gits deep."

Dan sat down again and took up the broken thread of his discourse.

"I ain't seen a Chris'mus-tree fer a good many years," he said. "When I were a young un there was a misshenary feller thet hired a room down in our district, and used to preach there, though he always said he warn't no regular preacher. He always hed two trees Chris'mus Eve—one with candy and things fer the children, and another one with sugar and coffee and hats and shoes and sich other things for the fathers and mothers—mostly the mothers. The last time I was there he give around the things, and then he begun to tell how Chris'mus-trees started. They grewed, he said, outer love, and ther never would a' been none of God A'mighty's Son hedn't a' been born in a stable. Then he went on talkin' about love bein' the all-powerfulest and astringest thing in natur'. He didn't git no pay fer what he did, and he seemed to b'lieve all the unreasonable things he said."

A blast of wind shut the door. Jack got up, opened it, and looked out.

"Gosh! I'm blamed ef thet snow ain't begun to drift, and Dave ain't more'n to the still," he said, and fastened the door.

"Can't you play somethin' on the fiddle?" said Dan, as the restlessness of his thirst grew on him, "an' make the time pass till the jug comes?"

Jack played to the extreme limit of his repertoire and the fiddle's two strings, but still Dave had not come. Dan got up and lifted the largest of the two jugs that stood on the earth floor. He held it to his nose.

"Tain't no use, Dan, thet's molasses."

"Durn it, I know it!" answered Dan, sitting down again.

Nubbin started up with a short bark and sniffed about the door, whining to get out. Jack unfastened the door.

"You kin go, Nubbin," he said, "fer your nose ain't beat on the mountain."

The dog ran down the clearing, rounding some snow-drifts, leaping some, till he stopped under the pine-tree at the turning, barking sharply.

"He's got somethin' sure; come on, Dan," and both men followed. Jack reached the pine-tree first.

"Hello, Dave! What ye doin'?" By gosh! he's froze. No, he ain't; here, pull him up, Dan."

Then the two men half dragged, half carried Dave to the cabin door.

"Where's the jug?" said Dan. "Is he got it squeezed up there—I'll be doggoned ef he ain't a-kerryin' a baby!"

Jack unclasped the stiff arm and laid the child on the bench inside. There was no time for words now. They rolled Dave in the snow, they rubbed it on his face and hands, they pulled off his shoes and rubbed his feet with it. At last he groaned—then Jack burrowed under the bunk and brought out a bottle.

"We kep' it fer snake-bites," he said.

"Well, I'll jes' take a swaller, to gimme strength to rub him," and having had a "swaller" Dan put the bottle to Dave's lips. As the blood came burning and stinging back to his limbs the charcoal-burner groaned again, and a half-hour later he sat dazed on the edge of the bunk. The child was crying.

"Mus' be cold," Dave said, looking stupidly at it.

"Tain't no more cold," said Jack as he unrolled several layers of blanket, "than a charcoal pit jes' opened."

Then the baby, kicking itself free, showed two small feet and legs covered with worn shoes and coarse red stockings, and struggling up sat staring abroad with two wide-open blue eyes.

"Where in God-a-mighty's name did you git it, an' where's the jug? You was holdin' to the bag yit."

Dave gazed stupidly a minute at his questioner.

"I dunno," he said.

"You dunno? Where'd you put it?"

"I dunno."

"He don't rightly remember yit," said Jack, and turned his attention to the baby, who was clamoring loudly for it.

"Give it somethin' to eat; maybe that'll shut it up," suggested Dan. "It oughter hev milk, I guess."

"Yer know there ain't no milk."

"Try a piece o' pork then."

Jack cut off a slice of bacon from the piece that hung behind the door, stuck a knife through it, and held it over the fire, then, having cooled it, offered it to the child. The small hand seized it and the baby gave its whole attention first to sucking it, and then to smearing its face with it.

"Give it some bread, too."

The coarse corn bread was evidently as much to the taste of the child as the bacon, for it ate it with many crumbings, and with gurgles of satisfaction.

"He don't want no milk, he's a regular coaler," said Jack, grinning.

Being fed, the child showed no resentment when Jack took it on his knee, and after a while it fell asleep with its head drooped against his arm. He nodded soon himself. Dave slept in the bunk, and Dan, concluding that the danger of snakes biting when snow was drifting was small, drained the bottle, and stretching himself with his feet to the fire soon filled the cabin with his snores.

Whatever the conditions of the baby's life before it was laid under the trestle may have been—and nothing about these was ever known—it adapted itself with as much facility to these new conditions as a government clerk to the politics of a new administration. It was probably this faculty that made its way clear to the affections of the camp. When the drifts melted away and allowed Dan a trip to the distillery, even he forgave the child for being a substitute for the jug on Christmas Eve.

One by one the choppers came back, and were each as surprised at the presence and as interested in the story of the finding of the child as they were incredulous about the "sayin'." For the sayings of the coalers are to the farmer's sons foolishness. Have they not sayings of their own, which are known to be true? It was Joe Watson who returned last to camp. Joe, it must be admitted, is an authority where babies are concerned. He had three, and he said he had "never seen none 'peerter' than the foundling." He suggested then, "ef Dave conceded he'd raise it, and long as it was a boy, he might call it 'Chris'—Christmas Purkiss, of course, upon any occasion of state. And during those many days when Dave's frost-bitten feet and hands kept him from his winter's chopping, Chris proved one of a trio that made the cabin a social centre. The baby, the fiddle and Nubbin generally drew a full house by sundown. Chris could stand when he came to camp; it was not long before he learned to walk, and toddled to Jack sitting on the bench at the fire, a matter of about eight feet from the bunk, where Dave had steadied him for the start.

By April, when the choppers went back to their farms and the coalers began to build and fire the pits, he could trot sturdily among the stumps in the clearing, and his cheeks, which had rounded, grew grimy in the smoke, but shone out when Dave washed them, rosy as the dawn.

"Ain't he picked up?" Dave said, and all the camp agreed that he had.

There has been an invasion of Tom's Mountain lately. The syndicate and the summer hotel have penetrated even to the border of the Furnace land. There is a new clearing and a new camp. Dan is no longer there. He has tramped back to the city and digs trenches where saloons are handy and snow-drifts rare. His conversational powers are much missed, and it was no doubt because of his suggestion that on the anniversary of the finding of the child under the trestle a pine branch was planted in the earth floor of Dave's cabin, and bedecked with some of the cheap toys that the Furnace keeps in stock at Christmas time. Perhaps it was the fear that if they were "drunk" they could not take part in this function that made Dave and Jack decide not to fill the jug at the still, but to depend only on the "snake-bite" bottle for emergencies and festivities. Dan had always sworn that these two charcoal-burners were "like children, who took a drink when they d nothin' else to do, and never cared for it like a reg'lar hand."

It is only down the road a "piece" from the new hotel to the charcoal camp. In the summer time you may see Dave and Jack tending the pits, and "Chris," who stands firmly on two stout little legs and has two very blue eyes shining out of a smoky face, and perhaps a black smirch on his fair hair where Dave has laid his hand. If you can divest your voice of any tone of patronage Dave may put the youngster through his paces for you.

"Who's the boss boy?"

"Chris, you bet."

"Who found yer?"

"Dave."

"What did yer bring him?"

"Luck."

"Who's the boss rabbit dog?"

"Nubbin, you bet."

"What yer goin' to be when yer big?"

"Be coaler."

If, however, Dave should tell you the story of the finding of the child it will be useless for you to argue with him about the absurdity of superstition, to laugh at his belief in "sayin's." He will laugh at you and say, "All I knows is it were lucky fer me I found Chris'mus. I'd a froze stiff that night o' the big storm ef it hadn't a' been fer thet there child that laid against my heart and kep' it warm."

You may stand among the pits and argue, but the smoke will make your eyes smart—that's all.

## DECEMBER.

WITHIN the leafless wood the plaintive wail  
Of shuddering branches mingles with the sound  
Of sedge, that moans along the frosted ground.  
The withered rushes bend before the gale,  
And in the tangled brush a shrill-voiced quail  
Answers his mate; solemn and profound,  
The deep-toned baying of a distant hound  
Swells echoing through the silence of the vale,  
While from his snowy covert on the hill,  
A hare, with faltering step and timid ear,  
Steals guiltily across the frozen rill  
And leaves his lost foe clamoring in the rear.  
A shadow falls upon the silent mill,  
And night has closed the eyelids of the year.

MARION F. HAM.





[By permission of the Berlin Photograph Company.]

## OLD SONGS.

BY HENRY TYRRELL.

THE sunset light is fading,  
The land is numb and chill.  
Of some sweet strain the ear were fain  
Now the harsh day is still.  
The world is touched with slumber,  
But hearts are wide awake:  
Oh, charm the keys with melodies  
To sing, for memory's sake!

Dear heart, the dews are falling  
Upon the garden sere:  
But quicken first the soul athirst  
For one melodious tear.  
Sing thou those songs o'erflowing  
With bygone joy and pain,  
That bear us back on dreamland's track  
To infancy again.

Sing those old songs, I prithee,  
Which like rose-vases be  
With memories thrilled, with odors filled  
Of ancient melody.  
Then, if thou wouldst at parting  
All inmost raptures move,  
Sing low and long that oldest song,  
The canzonet of love.

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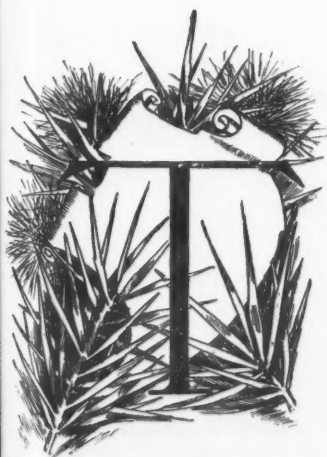




THE FINDING OF CHRISTMAS.—"He sank down under a pine-tree where the snow had drifted away."—[See story on preceding pages.]

## THE CHRISTMAS-EVE GHOST PARTY.

By LYNN R. MEEKINS.



HE ghost at Somerset Manor was the strangest ghost that ever was. At least, that is what Miss Leigh Millington said, and Miss Millington was so beautiful that she was privileged to say anything without the inconvenience of contradiction.

Even the women admitted that she was lovely, and when women admit a thing like that it must be so. The very worst criticism

was the declaration of old Mrs. Odson that Miss Leigh lacked repose; but some one was unkind enough to say that the reason Mrs. Odson was such a stickler for repose was that repose was about the only thing the Odson girls had, which explained why they remained unmarried so long. Men do not care to wed cultivated languor,—at least, that is what Robert Creekford said, and he ought to know, because he had been dancing attendance, in a half-hearted sort of way, upon "the elder Odson twin" for some six years.

Miss Millington could easily afford to bear any and all of the Odson criticisms. She was tall and she was fair, with dancing blue eyes and burnished hair, and a mouth that radiated brightness like a lot of ripples in the morning sunshine. She was a clear-cut girl, with a voice that sparkled and a laugh of music. She was well educated, well connected, well brought up, and well versed in all the little graces that make some people think the population of heaven exclusively feminine.

If she had been less attractive she would probably not have been visiting the Creekfords, notwithstanding that she was a distant cousin of the family. The Creekfords were at the very head of things in that section of the county, and Mrs. Creekford, although a widow of generous years, was so young in heart that her silver hair and grown son and daughter seemed impossibilities. She was a Wilcox, and every one knows that the Wilcoxs had been aristocrats in the county ever since the first officers of the law began to misspell names in the court records.

There was nowhere a more delightful place than that part of the State known as Creekford. It had maintained its social respectability for over a century; its families had furnished officers for the army, admirals for the navy, and statesmen for both branches of Congress. Its society had never gone into excesses, and the golden mean of its life had kept it from that sure decay which comes when wealth drowns culture by extravagance. For this reason an invitation to a house in Creekford was prized at the same value as fine jewels. It was something that mere money could not buy; not that it carried with it great excitements, but that it was a comfortable assurance of a social status. At this time it was a great thing for a girl to go to Creekford, because there was an unusually good crop of desirable young men, with no limit to their ingenuity in entertainment.

As the guest of the Creekfords, and really the belle of that district, Miss Millington had passed a very charming three weeks in December, and was looking for the Christmas week as a climax to her visit. On this particular morning she came down late and found Mrs. Creekford, Miss Creekford, and Robert Creekford assembled in the sitting-room. There were the usual greetings, and Robert handed to her an envelope,

with the remark, "Here is a bid for you." She opened it and read the following:

"Mr. Lawrence Bloom requests the pleasure of Miss Millington's company at 11 P.M., December 24th, to see the Ghost.—Supper.  
"Somerset Manor."

"You ought to feel complimented," said Robert, "because yours is a special invitation. The rest of the family are bunched."

"What does it mean?" she asked.

"Goodness only knows," replied Mrs. Creekford, "but it is sure to be something unique. Lawrence's home is the oldest house in the county, and some very queer stories have been told about the people who first lived in it. Some of the darkies will not go near it after nightfall, but just what the ghost is, or what it does, I really have forgotten."

"My impression is," said Robert, "that Lawrence has a new idea for a terrapin supper. His terrapin is like you, dear cousin—it is simply perfect."

And then, as they went in to breakfast, they continued to speculate upon the coming entertainment, but in a few minutes Robert began to tease Miss Leigh about the young men who were suitors for her favor.

For he it understood that Lawrence Bloom and Dr. Henry Casterbridge were trying to win her consent by every means in their power, and, although otherwise friendly, on this point they were the most belligerent of rivals. It would be difficult to decide between them, although each was different from the other. Henry was a physician, tall, fair and brilliant; Lawrence was a gentleman farmer, rather stout, rotund, dark, but solid and attractive in his mental equipment.

The day before Christmas came speedily. It was at the



## CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF

breakfast-table as usual that Robert looked up and began his questions.

"Which cavalier to-night, fair lady?" he asked. "Will Sir Lawrence drive over in the family coach to take you to his castle, or will Skull-and-Cross-Bones call for you in his carriage and get you to hold the horse while he makes a few professional visits on the way? Which shall it be?"

"The one who will first resent your impertinence."

"What! so early in the morning? You must have dreamt of goblins last night."

"I dreamt of you," she said, sweetly.

"And how did I appear?"

"You didn't appear. You disappeared. You married a rich girl."

"And became known to the world as the husband of Mrs. Creekford. It is a consummation devoutly to be—"

"Avoided by the young lady. Honestly, Robert, I think you can ask more impudent questions than any man I ever knew."

It was then that Mrs. Creekford interfered. She usually had to when these two began their breakfast hostilities.

The fact of the matter was that neither Bloom nor Dr. Casterbridge was to have the honor of driving Miss Millington to the ghost-party. She had had an engagement with the doctor, but he had said that, owing to sudden demands, he would be unable to take her, but would reach the house before the supper was over and would bring her back home. It was rather a bold request of him, but doctors are sometimes given to that kind of thing.

Somerses Manor, which was a name that had clung to it from the days before the Revolution, sat in a glorious wood on a modest hill. The road was circuitous at first, but finally ran into a long and noble entrance that went straight between great trees to the old-fashioned house, whose broad front porch seemed to invite everybody to go in and stay as long as possible. On Christmas Eve there were lights to aid the clear stars, but the whiteness of the snow made their assistance unnecessary. The jingling of sleigh-bells, the bright eyes of the guests, the how-dy-does and glad-to-see-yous, the little screams of the girls and the prancing and the neighing of the horses made enough life and noise and commotion to scare any ghost out of a century's growth, and the old square house seemed to blink solemnly from its windows, like an owl disturbed from its sleep.

It was not long before the guests were rubbing hands and holding fingers before the blazing logs in the great fireplace, which was another of the reminiscences of the days when people did not know the misfortunes of gas and water pipes and furnaces and plumbers. All were there—all of the dozen present and accounted for except Dr. Casterbridge, who had been detained, so Lawrence Bloom said, by important duties, and who would put in an appearance later.

Lawrence received his guests with delightful courtesy, and his round body appeared to glow like an orbit of cheerfulness.

They were now assembled in the big parlor, and the hands of the old-fashioned clock were traveling toward midnight.

"Before we have the pleasure of meeting this gentleman," said Robert Creekford, "won't Mr. Bloom kindly tell us about him? Is he merely an ordinary ghost, or is he a genteel villain with a record? Come, Lawrence, tell us about your spectral ancestor."

They gathered in a sort of semicircle around the fireplace, and Lawrence bent forward as if to take everybody into his confidence.

"In the first place," he said, "the ghost is not my ancestor. He belongs to the property which my people acquired."

"How disappointing!" said Miss Millington.

"But you will vouch for his respectability, will you not?" asked Mrs. Creekford.

"Unfortunately I cannot. He was a Tory, a red-handed, dark-hearted, unconscionable Tory."

"Oh!" interrupted Robert. "I fear he belonged to the Farmers' Alliance, or the Hod-Carriers' Union. If he was an aristocrat, all right."

"It's a long and sad story—"

"As the man said who had married six times."

"Robert, hush!" said Mrs. Creekford, "and let Lawrence tell us about him."

Bloom arose and stood with one hand on the mantelpiece. As the flickering lights fell against his well-rounded form he made a very striking picture in spite of a lack of height. The guests leaned back in the chairs and waited in complete attention for his recital.

"We must go back to 1776," he said. "The closing months of that year were very hard for the poor colonists. There were disastrous defeats for the American cause. By the first of December Washington's army had been reduced to a miserable three thousand men, and on December 13th the British cavalry had dashed into a New Jersey town and captured General Lee. Of course, in those days, the news traveled slowly, and all these successes had not reached the Tory who lived on this inaccessible estate, and who gloried in his allegiance to the Crown. He knew of the Declaration of Independence. He saw the men of this neighborhood go off to fight for liberty, and he secluded himself in this house to await the tidings of the subjugation of the rebellion and the triumph of his sovereign. But no word came, and he was growing sad, disappointed, and disconsolate. It went on this way until Christmas Eve, when by some accident he heard of the British success, of the disasters to the rebels, and the apparent hopelessness of the Revolution. He did not know that that very night Washington was preparing to cross the Delaware to surprise the drunken Hessians, and that within forty-eight hours the battle of Trenton would leave a thousand of the hirelings dead upon the field, and would turn the tide that finally swept despotism forever from our shores."

Robert Creekford here clapped his hands in applause, but he was quickly suppressed and the recital continued.

"He only knew that the belated news filled his soul with ecstasy. The old cannon which he had hid in the cellar was loaded, and the explosion shook the neighborhood. He illuminated the house and toasted King George until he was gloriously drunk."

"How disgraceful!" said Mrs. Odson.

"By this time the few loyal colonists around here had crept through the darkness to see what it all meant. They stood behind trees near the lower gate and watched the strange proceedings. It was late, and midnight soon came. As the big clock began to strike the hour the old Tory threw open the door that leads to the porch, and rushing forth, cried at the top of his lungs, 'Long live the King! Long live King George the Fourth!' Then he danced in delirious madness, but just as the clock struck the twelfth time there was a flash at the gate, followed by a report, and the grim old Tory fell mortally wounded down the steps."

"And now?" asked some one.

"And now every Christmas Eve, if the house is illuminated and the clock is running and snow is on the ground, his spectre, wearing a wig and dressed in knee-breeches and silk stockings and a long frock coat, and waving a big handkerchief, executes the same dance, and falls and disappears at the twelfth stroke of the clock."

"Wonderful!" said Mrs. Creekford.

"Yes," said Bloom, "and that is the reason I never pass Christmas Eve here alone."

"Why not invite him to supper?" put in Robert. "He must be rather hungry after a century or so of starvation."

"Because he might make the thirteenth guest," said Lawrence. "I am not superstitious, but in deference to Miss Millington, who is, he must stay out of doors."

"Then he isn't in the house at all?" she asked.

"Oh, no; as a ghost he is extremely considerate, and respects the ownership of the property."

"Well, that is a comfort," said Miss Millington. "If he were here he might be sitting in this chair at my side, and—"

"Permit me to take it, then," gallantly interrupted Bloom; "and as it is twenty minutes before the time of his appearance, let us dismiss ghosts and talk of something else."

The party broke up into little groups, some to admire the rare old furniture and impossible portraits, and others to gossip about anything and everything. Lawrence showed Miss Millington the curious mantelpiece and sat with her near one of the side windows. He was talking so confidently and so seriously that he forgot how time was passing, until suddenly some one exclaimed:

"It is one minute to twelve."

Lawrence immediately arose and opened the outer door. The light sent forth a soft and faint radiance, leaving one corner of the porch in darkness. The clock struck, and before the second stroke was heard a graceful figure with back toward the guests, who sat silently, almost breathlessly, within, moved briskly yet with dignity to the front of the porch. It was fully six feet tall, of excellent proportions, with a wig of snowy whiteness, with the gray frock coat, the knickerbockers, the silk stockings, and all the richness of the old-time dress.

At the end of another stroke it threw its hands upward, waved its arms, and began to dance in violent glee. Then it moved recklessly from a waltz step to a jig. It cavorted and waved a great handkerchief. It stood straight and then moved as if in stately minuet. As the eleventh stroke sounded it jumped wildly, and its whole body seemed to unite in one great effort.

The twelfth stroke came, and the spectre seemed to instantly stand still; then to clasp its hands to its breast, and finally to totter and fall into the darkness.

Within the parlor there was absolute stillness. No one seemed to have breathed during those twelve strokes, and the silence followed the figure into the shadow. Lawrence Bloom was the first one to recover himself.

"That is all," he said.

"It is enough," said Miss Millington. "I'm scared almost to death."

And then, when the silence was broken, everybody talked at the highest possible speed, all at once, and nobody seemed to know exactly what any other body said. The conversational tangle was unraveled by the appearance of the servant, who announced:

"Supper is served."

As he did so the bark of a dog was heard. Lawrence turned uneasily and listened, but there was no further noise, and the procession went on to the supper-room.

It was a beautiful sight that met their gaze. The old mahogany table that had been there goodness only knows how many years was decorated with Aunt Hannah's best skill, and the glassware and the silverware were faultlessly resplendent. From the ceiling above hung a big bunch of Maryland mistletoe, and at each plate a boutonniere of the lichen which has wooed into happiness many a reluctant kiss, and added immeasurably to the joys of the holiday season. Around the room were wreaths and evergreen boughs, and in the centre of the table was a Christmas-tree full of toys, bon-bon boxes, and tinsel.

A general exclamation of admiration brought blushes to Lawrence's cheeks as he sat down with Mrs. Creekford on his right and Miss Millington on his left, and the supper began with great promise. The ghost was almost forgotten in the enjoyment of the feast and the decorations.

"It is simply perfect," said Mrs. Creekford,—and higher praise than that could not be bestowed, for Mrs. Creekford never used superlatives except on superlative occasions.

There was a lively rattle of conversation. It was the reaction from the spectral stillness of the midnight experience, and talk not only flowed like a stream, but intermingled in cross currents and eddies, and drowned all sounds of the house. After being politely genial to Mrs. Creekford, Lawrence, in spite of his better intentions, gave all his time to Miss Millington, and Mrs. Creekford, not caring to talk to the vapid young Odson who was next to her, began to enjoy a very private conversation. She looked at Bloom and saw his devotion, and it seemed to entertain her.

"It is always amusing to me," she was saying to herself, "to watch the different ways men make love. A man makes love even when he doesn't have a thought of it, and there is nothing in the world more delightful than unconscious love-making. See how it is going on around this table now. Of

course dear Mr. Creekford was my ideal of a lover; he was so beautiful, so manly, so direct, and when he came to the final question and that final offer, how I collapsed right into his arms and his life. Robert seems to differ entirely from his father. Look at him now. He's been circling around that same Odson girl for six years, and either she has not the sense to take him or he has not the courage to take her. She would make him a harmless sort of a wife. Of course he might go off and do better, but then he might do worse, and a pigeon in hand is worth several possible vultures in the bush. Now Henry Casterbridge—it seems strange to think of him as a doctor—is more of an ideal lover. He has the dash—the manly impudence that charms a woman—we poor creatures undoubtedly do like to be commanded by those we trust—the more's the pity. And yet look at Lawrence Bloom—how attentive he is! Both love Leigh to distraction, and it's only a question of which she will take. I believe I would take Henry—Lawrence is a little too slow, but there is no doubt about his devotion. That's one reason why I'm musing. He has forgotten I'm here, although our elbows are almost touching. It's quite inexcusable—even if he is in love."

At this point some one asked, "I wonder why Dr. Casterbridge is so late?" but it happened that there was something more important just then at hand.

The terrapin was coming, and the guests had settled themselves in eager expectation of the dish. With Lawrence Bloom terrapin was not a common pride—it was a supreme satisfaction. It was not cooked as Philadelphians cook it, with an admixture of things that make it a mockery, or as New-Yorkers cook it, with additions that disguise it completely. Aunt Hannah's gastronomic ideas had not been educated away from the intrinsic excellence of the raw material. She took the terrapin and respected it for itself, and when it came forth it was terrapin with all the aroma and succulence and indescribable unctious of the reptile preserved. It was brought on the table in a large chafing-dish with the fire still beneath it, and was reverently served hot. It was not lost in an over-abundance of other things. A piece of bread and a little sherry were its sole accompaniments.

And so, when everything was ready and everybody was waiting, the main effect of the question about Dr. Casterbridge was to provoke the commiseration that he could not be there to enjoy the best part of the supper.

Suddenly the silence was interrupted by the most intense and indescribable scream that mortal ever heard. It shrieked through the house like a last wail. Again it sounded, and then after a pause it ran into a concatenation of screams, ending in hysterics.

The guests jumped from their seats, thoroughly alarmed, and Lawrence Bloom dropped his napkin and started for the kitchen without having excused himself, but before he took half a dozen steps the door flew open, and there stood Aunt Hannah trembling like a leaf and calling on the angels to protect her.

"Jes' spar' me dis time—jes' dis time!" she was saying. "Oh, folkses! oh, please keep him off, please—"

"Aunt Hannah," said Lawrence, sternly, "what's the matter with you? Are you crazy?"

"No, Mars' Lawrence; 'deed I seed hit—'deed I did."

"You saw what?"

"De hant." She meant haunt, the negro word for ghost.

"What!" came the chorus from the people, who now prepared to defend themselves, grabbing knives and forks and chairs, or anything else that was near.

"Calm yourself, Aunt Hannah," commanded Lawrence. "Have you lost your senses?"

"No, Mars' Lawrence, 'deed I hain't; 'deed I seed hit, en hit's gone and tooked my poor boy."

She tried to keep the tears back, but she couldn't.

"Stop your nonsense, Hannah," said Lawrence again, "and tell Caesar to bring in the terrapin."

"He's done gone, he's done gone!" cried the old woman.

Lawrence's patience was exhausted. He advanced and took her by the shoulder and shook her.

"Now behave yourself," he said, "and tell us what has happened."

"Yes, tell us," cried several of the party at once.

Aunt Hannah became somewhat more calm, but she was still greatly frightened, and the words that followed came between fitful sobs.

"I'd jes' went to de pantry en' were a-turnin' roun' when all ob a sudden I looks up en' seed—oh, Laws a mercy! sich a awful sight what I seed!" She sobbed and trembled again.

"Well, what did you see?" asked Robert.

"I seed a great big hant, nigh 'bout high as de ceilin', en' pintin' a hoss-pistol more'n a yard long—pintin' hit—pintin' hit—oh, Laws!" and she broke forth again.

"Pointing it at whom? At you?"

"No, no, sir; at Caesar. My poor boy, Caesar."

She paused a moment, and seeing that everybody was listening with dramatic eagerness, and that the ladies were staring as if their lives depended upon her words, pride conquered fear, and confidence came with a realization of her sudden importance. So her sentences began to have some meaning.

"De tar'pin were all done, 'en I jes' had it fixed in de dish wid de sperret lamp a-burnin', en' I'd jest gibbed it to Caesar to bring in, en' had went to de cubbud en' were a-takin' down some plates, when all on a sudden I heerd a whisperin', en' I look erround, and dere, bless my soul! were de hant wid a hoss-pistol a-pintin' hit at Caesar, en' a-sayin' 'You come wid me.' En' Caesar gibbed me a look I shill neber forgit to my dyin' day, en' den when dey took to de sta'en' en' got out I jes' hollered en' hollered. I begs, your parding, but I couldn't a' hoped it to saved my life. I jes' had to holler."

The guests looked at one another and at Bloom. He frowned somewhat, and then smiled and said, cheerfully:

"It's all right, ladies and gentlemen. I will soon explain it. You remain here and I will go look for the ghost."

"Oh, no, you don't," said Robert Creekford; "not by a large majority. If you go, we go too; don't we?" and he appealed to the party.

"We do," they replied with emphasis.



— refuse to stay here and be stolen by 'hants' with horse-pistols a yard long, I do," continued Robert; "but of course if the ladies want to stay they can."

A chorus of indignant screams was the reply. "Well," said Lawrence, slowly, "you may all follow me."

He took a lamp and opened the door and proceeded up the steps. The others followed in silent array, and Aunt Hannah brought up the rear with a broom as a weapon of defense.

They reached the second story and proceeded slowly down the corridor. Suddenly Lawrence stopped, and while the ladies trembled he announced:

"I think he is in this room. Hello! what's this?"

Holding the lamp up, a sheet of paper shone forth on the dark door. On it was this inscription, written in rude characters:

YE GOST IS  
BIZZIE  
PLEASE CALL AGANE  
XMAS.

The ladies crowded forward to see it. They looked at one another and then at their host. Lawrence lost no time. He rapped vigorously upon the door. There was no response. He waited a moment and rapped again, this time still harder than before. Still there was no movement in the room.

"If you don't open I'll break in the door," he cried.

There was another slight pause, the guests silently and speechlessly awaiting the result. Lawrence grabbed the knob and immediately the door yielded to the pressure.

It was a curious and altogether unexpected spectacle. The apartment was the smoking-room of the house, and at the end of the long table in its centre sat the ghost, calmly staring at the intruders, with the terrapin in front of him, with an ordinary old-fashioned pistol by his side, and with the colored boy Caesar near the window, vainly trying to turn pale.

As the party with all sorts of screams and exclamations surged in, the ghost arose and began a speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I entered into this conspiracy with Mr. Lawrence Bloom upon a clearly defined understanding, the terms of which he has dishonorably neglected to carry out. I was to afford the spectral part of the entertainment and he was to provide the terrapin. He furthermore agreed to chain all his dogs securely and to have me protected while ascending to the second story for a change of costume, so that I could join you in the midst of your festivities. To my infinite dismay one of his savage brutes intercepted my retreat from the porch and seriously impaired the integrity of an important part of my spectral attire. By the greatest difficulty I succeeded in getting to this room, but I found that the apartment in which I had stored my evening dress had been locked. After patient investigation I succeeded in finding a part of Mr. Bloom's discarded wardrobe, and this fact will explain to you the incongruity of my present appearance—the union, if I may so speak—of nineteenth-century trousers with an eighteenth-century coat and vest, not to mention the wig. In view of this bad faith I decline to surrender to this invasion, which is clearly illegal, except on my own terms, and those terms are that I shall occupy Bloom's place, and that Bloom shall wait upon the table."

In vain did Bloom exclaim that he had kept the matter from Aunt Hannah and Caesar; in vain did he make Caesar testify that he had innocently unchained the dog; in vain did he bring forth Aunt Hannah to prove that she had slipped up at midnight and locked the door because he had told her that he wished no one to go into that particular room. Dr. Casterbridge was obdurate, and it all ended in Bloom's complete capitulation. They gave the doctor time to make a few changes in his wardrobe, and then the procession started for the supper-room, Bloom in the lead, bearing the chafing-dish as high as he could hold it, the doctor escorting Mrs. Creekford and Miss Millington, the others following, and Aunt Hannah, still clutching the broomstick, bringing up the rear.

The rest of that supper was the jolliest that ever was known, and the next morning at the Creekford breakfast-table Robert was trying to find out how in the world Dr. Casterbridge and Miss Millington, with the fastest horse in the county, managed to get home fully an hour later than any of the other members of the family.

Another Christmas came. Miss Millington was again a visitor at Creekford. The engagement had just been announced.

"Of course, dear," said Mrs. Creekford, "I am perfectly satisfied, for he is one of the finest and most desirable young men I have ever known. But how about the doctor?"

Miss Millington blushed as she replied:

"Well, in the first place, I think I love Lawrence, and in the second place I am sure I could never endure being attached to a ghost for life, even though he wasn't a ghost at all."

And Robert and the Odson girl, who was now his wife, added their congratulations.

## "THE STORY OF THE KING."

WRITTEN FOR THE CHILDREN.

It was in the drear December;  
The heart of the wintry days,  
When I sat before the fireplace  
And watched the back-log blaze,  
That my children gathered around me  
In the quiet of evening  
And called for the wonderful story—  
The story of the King.

So I told them the old, old story  
Of the King and His humble birth—  
The King whose reign has been longest  
And purest of all on earth.  
How He played as a child with the children,  
And how, when He grew a man,  
He loved the suffering people  
As only a good King can.

How the people brought Him by hundreds  
The sick, the blind, and the lame,  
How He cured them of all their troubles

When they called on His holy name.  
Of the tender stories He told them  
Of His beautiful home above,  
Where there never was any sorrow,  
Only peace and unending love.

And I told how the Jewish mothers  
In fondness their children brought,  
That the gentle King might bless them  
In the place where He cured and taught.  
How He softly said, when He placed one  
In their midst, that all might see,  
"Of such is the kingdom of Heaven.  
Let the little ones come unto me."

Of the crowds that followed His footsteps,  
Of the burden of pain He bore,  
Of the cruel death He suffered,  
And the crown of thorns He wore.  
When I ended, the eyes of my darlings  
Were wet with such pitying tears

As all have wept who have listened  
In the space of two thousand years.

The snow beat thick on the windows  
Outside in the cold and gloom,  
As I knelt with my dear ones round me  
In the glow of the fire-lit room  
And asked of the loving Saviour  
That, whatever the years might bring  
To my children who knelt beside me,  
They might never forget their King.

'Tis years since that happy evening,  
And my hair is as drifted snow;  
My babies have gone before me  
To the country where I shall go.  
But I dream of their childish graces  
While the bells of Christmas ring,  
And know I shall meet and greet them  
When I meet and greet the King.

ROSS DEFORRIS.

## CHRISTMAS IN A CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.



SANTA CLAUS was in his cozy den reading the letters brought by the morning mail from all over the world. The children know how hard it is to choose gifts for their own families, and so, thoughtful little creatures, they seek to help their old friend in the perplexity of selecting for thousands and hundreds of thousands every year; and as they know very well what they want for themselves, they write their requests. This is really a great assistance to the good old fellow, who heartily enjoys the frankness of the queer letters, and is particularly happy when they are well written and correctly spelled and expressed. That morning the letters were unusually interesting, and his eyes danced merrily, while his pencil fairly flew as he jotted down the items in his note-book. As he opened a large envelope his cherry nose gave a displeased little sniff, and he puckered up his forehead and twisted his snowy beard, wondering when and where he had once before smelled carbolic acid and iodoform.

"Ah!" said he, after a moment, "this must come from the patient laddie who was so long under the surgeon's care last year. Dear boy! I hoped that he would be well by this time, and able to enjoy a merry Christmas."

But instead of a childish scrawl was a firm, graceful handwriting, which set forth that the children in St. Anne's Hospital longed for a visit from Santa Claus; that the little creatures had never had their stockings filled, nor had their suffering lives ever been brightened by the glowing tapers of the Christmas-tree!

"Dear! dear!" sighed the generous soul, as he wiped his eyes on a doll's lace handkerchief which lay conveniently near, "only to think that there are children who never knew me—who never had a Christmas! This is a bad business. I must have thought that St. Anne's was for *grown-ups*; but I'll give them a good time now, poor babies!"

And so, half-scolding himself, half-grumbling that he had never been notified before, Santa Claus took the letter and

read the details which—to insure sympathy and interest—the good sister had written concerning her charges.

"Paul—about three years old—has both legs paralyzed. He plays with his poor, useless limbs; lifts one up, cuddles it to his breast, and kissing the wee, rosy toes, calls it 'Paul's baby.' He hushes it to sleep, and laying it beneath the bed-clothes, keeps very quiet for a while; then, changing his tone, says that his baby is naughty, and slaps it to make it good."

"Lucy is ten, and so bright and full of fun that she is adored by the other children. They take her out of her wheeled chair, and wreathing their arms about her, carry or drag her into places where the chair cannot go."

"Harold is also ten, and a sensible, well-bred little gentleman. Quiet as a mouse, apparently doing nothing to enforce authority, he keeps order in the corridors and play-room, and the naughtiest and most willful yield to his magnetic power."

"Baby Jessie, who is not yet three years old, is a born coquette, and makes slaves of us all by her winsome imperiousness. Doctors and nurses contend for the honor of carrying her, for the tiny feet have never walked. Our pretty baby is paralyzed."

So the list went on, characterizing each child, until it closed with these words:

"And now, dear Santa Claus, comes an extraordinary wish. A fragile mite, only four years old, has set her heart upon having a pink silk dress. We have tried to divert her from the fancy by suggesting all sorts of tempting things, but in vain, and she pleads pitifully that we shall ask you for the frock, as nothing else will satisfy her."

"Well!" exclaimed Santa Claus, "that is indeed a queer whim. But the child must not be disappointed, and as she is so small the gown will not be expensive, and the dolls' dress-maker must get it up in her best style. Let me see," he went on, "what is the best way to give these presents? If I go down the chimney these light sleepers will be roused by the sleigh-bells, and will hear

"—on the roof,  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof"

of my reindeer! I think—no—yes, now I have it. Some of those lovely girls who are so interested in the flower mission shall undertake this for me!" And, chuckling over the happy thought, Santa Claus trotted off to his store-rooms and gave most liberal orders in regard to the packages destined for St. Anne's Hospital.

On Christmas morning the sick children woke to find their wards dressed with holly wreaths and stars of evergreen, and noticing that the sisters, usually so quiet, had an air of excitement, they immediately became curious and restless. They had not long to wait. Beautiful ladies, with their arms filled with parcels, appeared as if by magic, and going from bed to bed, gave each child the gift desired; and while the visitors wished a "Happy Christmas," their voices thrilled with sympathy, and their bright eyes grew misty. At last they reached the cot of the little girl who had begged for a silk frock. She was carefully raised in the arms of one of these visiting fairies, while another slipped the dress into place, the child looking into the sweet, earnest faces with radiant but silent happiness. All day she lay quiet, absorbed in the contemplation of the lovely color and the silken splendor. [A few days later the Christ-child sent His angels for the little sufferer, and the good sisters clothed the wasted form in the dainty frock which had given such pleasure.]

There were other delights for the children, and at twilight they were taken into the largest ward and seated in rows before a great screen. Their eager, busy whispers were stilled as a voice cried "Ready!" and in another moment were revealed the dazzling splendors of a Christmas-tree, which, with its blazing tapers, its bright balls, its gilded fruit, and its festoons of parti-colored paper rings, rose from a snowy bank ingeniously fashioned of the cotton batting which is an indispensable article in hospitals.

Simple toys were distributed, and when bed-time came the happy children insisted that all their treasures should be hung on the branches, and every night, as long as the tree remained, they brought or sent their dolls and toys to make it pretty again.

M. H. N.





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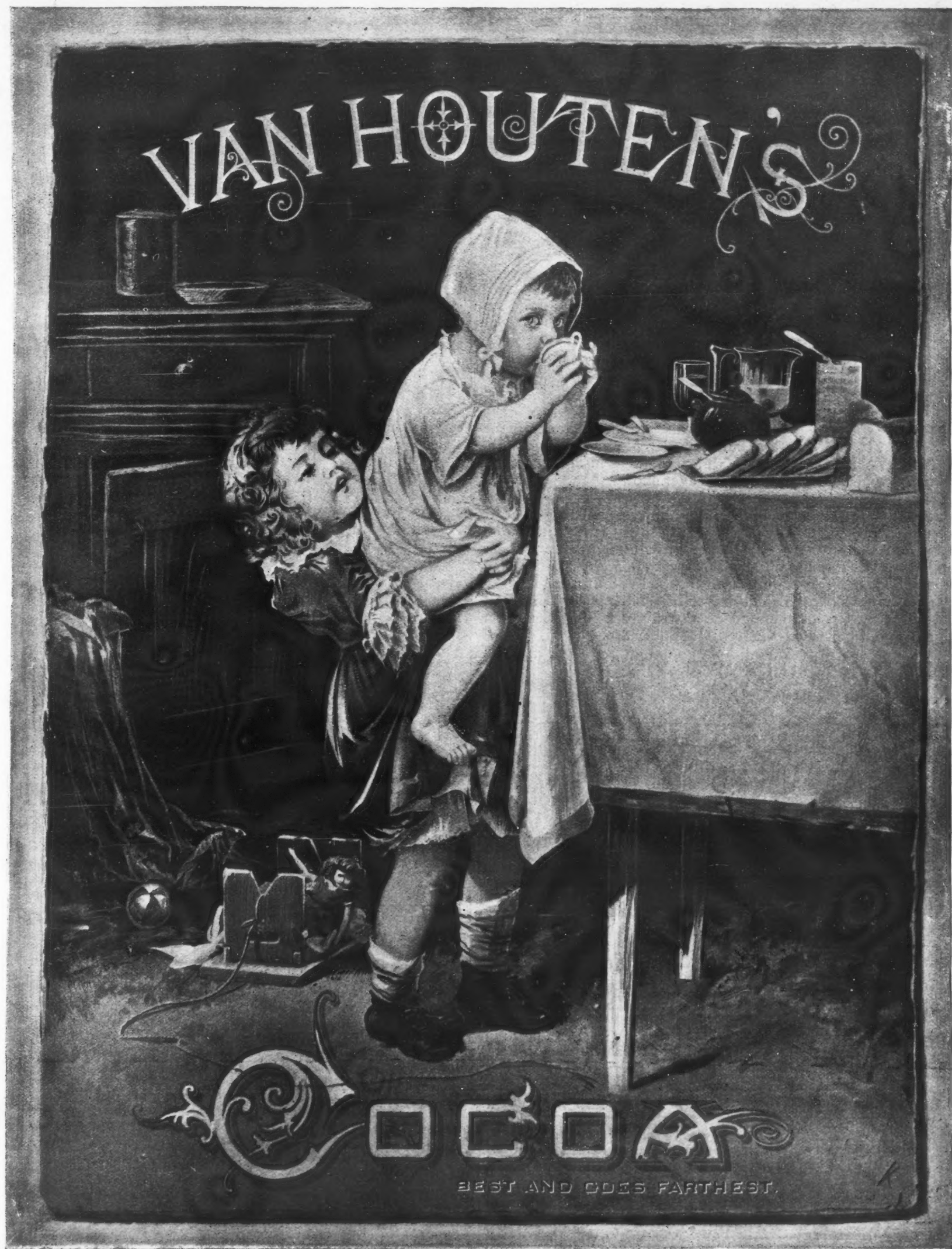
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Sure!  
Sound!  
Secure!**

MEMBERSHIP, OVER - - - 70,000  
Interest Income annually exceeds - \$127,000.00  
Bi-monthly Income exceeds - 600,000.00  
RESERVE FUND SEPT. 21st, 1892, 3,305,998.14  
Death Claims paid, over - 14,500,000.00  
New Business in 1891 exceeds - } 50,000,000.00  
New Business to Nov. 1st, 1892, over - } 45,000,000.00  
INSURANCE IN FORCE exceeds 225,000,000.00

## The Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association

Furnishes Life Insurance at about One-Half the usual rates charged by the old-system companies. It has excellent positions to offer in its Agency Department in every City, Town and State, to experienced and successful business men. Parties desiring Insurance will be furnished free information at the Home office or by any of the Association's General Agents.

Home Office is { "Potter Building," } New York City.  
38 Park Row,

E. B. HARPER, President.

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## A fresh start

is given to many a career by the discovery of time-values. The earlier this is understood the better, yet it is never too late. Success may suddenly spring from a new mastery of the minutes; through possessing an accurate timekeeper like the new, **quick-winding** Waterbury, which winds in about *five seconds*. \$4 to \$15.

The price need never prevent your possessing a beautiful little chatelaine or hunting-case watch, with jeweled movement—to insure accuracy—and cased in coin-silver or 10 to 14-karat, filled, gold—warranted.

Every jeweler keeps it in all styles for everybody: "A better timekeeper than a hundred dollar watch a friend of mine bought some months ago," says the Newburyport Herald man. "See it."

Isn't there some member of your family that really needs one?

N4-23

## Sackett & Wilhelms Lithographing Co.

110 FIFTH AVE., Cor. 16th St., NEW YORK.  
(JUDGE BUILDING.)

FINEST CLASS OF

COLOR  
PRINTING.

BILL, LETTER AND NOTE HEADS,  
BUSINESS CARDS, . . . .  
CERTIFICATES, BONDS, ETC. .

## 24 Cash Prizes.

We desire to thoroughly introduce our Sunol Bicycles throughout the United States in 1893, and in order to give them such an introduction, we realize that we must advertise liberally and well. We are willing to advertise liberally, but that it may be done well, we must have a supply of bright original advertisements. We therefore make the following offer for the best 24 advertising ideas, first prize to be awarded to the author of the best, second prize to the author of the second best, etc.; decision to be made by three competent judges:

1st Prize, \$200. 2nd Prize, \$100. 3rd Prize, \$50.  
4th Prize, \$25. 5th to 24th Prize, \$10.

We will also pay \$5.00 for each idea not securing a prize that we think we can make use of. Contest closes January 15th, 1893. For particulars as to the nature of advertisements required, etc., address—

The McIntosh-Huntington Co.,

Adv. Dep't.

Cleveland, Ohio.

## Crosby's Vitalized Phosphites.



From the phosphoid principle of the ox-brain, and embryo of wheat.

The *very best* Tonic for preventing nervous break-down, and for restoring vigor to the weakened, "used up," or brain-wearied.

It is a *vital, nutrient* phosphite, not an acid phosphate.

The Formula is printed on each label.

Pamphlet with full information free.

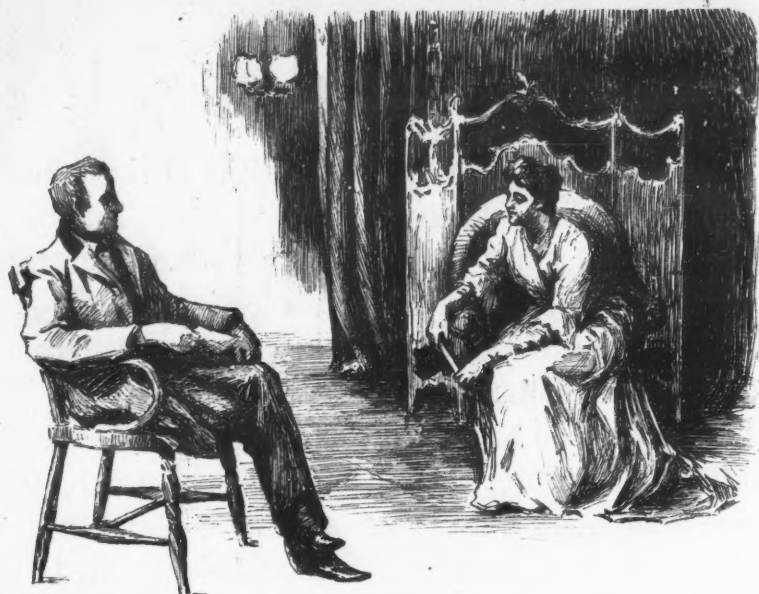
Druggists, or by mail (\$1.00), from 56 W. 25th St., N. Y.

None genuine without this signature

*Crosby & Co.*

Also Crosby's Cold and Catarrh Cure. Invaluable for Cold in the Head and Influenza. Price, 50 cents





HE—"Your refusal leaves me nothing to hope for."  
SHE—"How odd; you just told me that my love would leave you nothing to wish for."

**O'NEILL'S**  
SIXTH AVENUE,  
20th to 21st STREET, N. Y.



**IMPORTERS AND RETAILERS**  
**FINE MILLINERY, DRY GOODS,**  
**FANCY GOODS, ETC.**  
**HOUSE FURNISHINGS, CHINA AND GLASSWARE.**

We beg to inform our Patrons that we have now on exhibition the finest line of **SPRING AND SUMMER MILLINERY, COSTUMES, WRAPS, JACKETS, DRESS GOODS, SILKS, Etc.**, in this city. Pay a visit to our Mammoth Establishment, or, if it is not convenient for you to do so, send for our Illustrated Catalogue, and see the inducements we are offering. We are sure we can please you both in quality and price.

**PAID PARCELS DELIVERED FREE TO ANY ADDRESS WITHIN 75 MILES OF THIS CITY.**

**H. O'NEILL & CO., 6th AVE., N. Y.**

**AU BON MARCHÉ**  
NOUVEAUTES  
MAISON ARISTIDE BOUCICAUT  
**PARIS**



The system of selling everything at a small profit and of a thoroughly reliable quality, is strictly maintained at AU BON MARCHÉ

AU BON MARCHÉ possess in every department the richest, most elegant and most complete choice of all classes of goods; it is acknowledged that they offer the greatest advantages, both in quality and sterling value of everything exposed for sale.

This Establishment is the largest and the best organized of its kind in the world and one of the most remarkable sights of PARIS.

Catalogues, Patterns, Albums and Designs of all Made up Goods are sent free on demand.

Purchases shipped to any part of the Globe  
Correspondance in all languages.

**VICTORS MAKE THE PACE**

Let your Christmas present be as generous as the promptings of your heart; as liberal as your purse. What can prove more valuable than a present of health, happiness and long life, such as goes with a high grade bicycle; a Victor bicycle?

OVERMAN WHEEL CO.  
BOSTON, DENVER, WASHINGTON, SAN FRANCISCO.

A. G. SPALDING & BROS.  
SPECIAL AGENTS,  
CHICAGO, NEW YORK, PHILADELPHIA.

**SAFEST,  
FASTEST AND FINEST  
TRAINS IN AMERICA**



**Baltimore & Ohio Railroad**

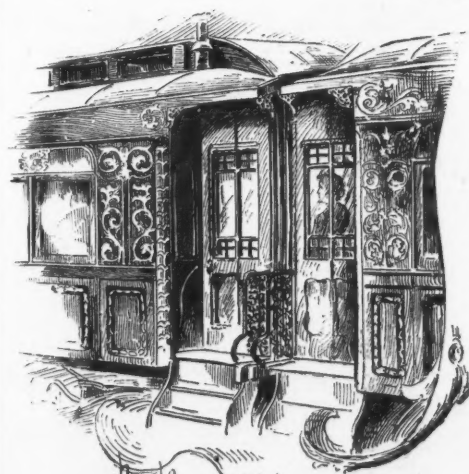
BETWEEN  
**NEW YORK, PHILADELPHIA,  
BALTIMORE AND WASHINGTON.**

ALL TRAINS VESTIBULED FROM END TO END,

And protected by Pullman's Anti-Telescoping Appliance, including Baggage Cars, Day Coaches, Parlor Cars, and Sleepers.

ALL CARS HEATED BY STEAM, AND LIGHTED BY PINTSCH GAS.

**THE BALTIMORE & OHIO R. R.**  
MAINTAINS A COMPLETE SERVICE OF VESTIBULED EXPRESS TRAINS BETWEEN



New York, Cincinnati,  
St. Louis and Chicago

EQUIPPED WITH

**Pullman Palace Sleeping-Cars**

RUNNING THROUGH WITHOUT CHANGE.

**ALL B. & O. TRAINS**

Between the East and West

**RUN VIA WASHINGTON.**

PRINCIPAL OFFICES:

211 Washington Street, Boston, Mass.  
415 Broadway, New York.  
N. E. Cor. 9th & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, Pa.  
Cor. Baltimore & Calvert Sts., Baltimore, Md.  
1351 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D. C.  
Cor. Wood St. and Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Corner 4th and Vine Streets, Cincinnati, O.  
193 Clark Street, Chicago, Ill.  
205 North Broadway, St. Louis, Mo.

Through  
the Vestibule

J. T. ODELL,  
General Manager.

BALTIMORE, MD.

CHAS. O. SCULL,  
General Passenger Agent.

**The Hoffman House  
BOUQUET CIGAR**

SMOKED BY CONNOISSEURS.

ON SALE AT ALL POPULAR CLUBS, CAFES, HOTELS, AND DEALERS GENERALLY.

**FOSTER-HILSON CO., Makers,**

Cor. 39th Street and First Avenue,

P. S.—If your dealer does not keep them order direct of us.

NEW YORK.



**NO TRIAL IS NECESSARY,**  
a mere examination suffices to prove the superiority of Hartman Flexible Steel Wire Mats. Ask your dealer for one.

**HARTMAN MANUFACTURING CO.,** Beaver Falls, Pa.  
Branches: 102 Chambers St., New York; 508 State St., Chicago; 51 and 53 S. Forsyth St., Atlanta, Ga. Catalogue and testimonials mailed free.

Our Mats have brass tag attached stamped "Hartman."



## PERFECT GIFT-BOOKS.

Warner's In the Levant.

Finely Illustrated with about twenty-five Photogravures of Scenes in the East. 2 vols. 12mo. Beautifully printed and bound. \$5.00.

Hawthorne's Wonder-Book.

Superbly Illustrated with Colored Pictures by WALTER CRANE. \$3.00.

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Including his last Poems, with eight new Illustrations and a Portrait. \$1.50.

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With Photogravures of DARLEY'S 16 Illustrations, 8vo. \$2.00.

Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter.

With Photogravures of DARLEY'S 12 Illustrations, 8vo. \$2.00.

Sold by Booksellers. Sent, postpaid, by

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO., Boston.

11 EAST 17TH STREET, NEW YORK.

1784. 1892. Used by Ladies Everywhere



Embroidery, KNITTING AND Crochet Work.

For Cluny, Antique, Russian, Macrame and other Laces.

Sold by all respectable dealers throughout the country, on Spools and in Balls.

LINEN FLOSS in SKEINS or BALLS.

THE BARBOUR BROTHERS COMPANY.

NEW YORK, BOSTON, PHILADELPHIA, CHICAGO, ST. LOUIS, SAN FRANCISCO.

Ask for BARBOUR'S

## BEST & CO



## School Aprons.

Fine Lawn trimmed with deep ruffle of colored embroidery; sizes 4 to 10 years at

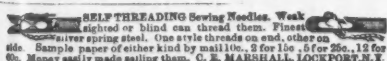
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(Sent by mail postage paid for \$1.00.)

Young Peoples outfitting is our exclusive specialty. This means advantages in choice, fit and price, impossible elsewhere.

Mail orders have careful attention. Full descriptions of latest styles for Boys and Girls furnished on application.

60-62 West 23d St., N. Y.



Unlike the Dutch Process

No Alkalies

—OR— Other Chemicals

are used in the preparation of

W. BAKER & CO.'S

Breakfast Cocoa

which is absolutely pure and soluble.

It has more than three times the strength of Cocoa mixed with Starch, Arrowroot or Sugar, and is far more economical, costing less than one cent a cup.

It is delicious, nourishing, and EASILY DIGESTED.

Sold by Grocers everywhere.

W. BAKER & CO., Dorchester, Mass.



## —THE— TENNYSON NEW YEAR'S SPOON.

THE LOVELIEST OF ALL.

"Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light;  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

"Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow;  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true."

—In Memoriam.

Coffee size, \$1.50—Gold

Bowl, \$1.75.

Tea size, \$3.00—Gold

Bowl, \$3.50.

Send for illustrated price-list of Holiday suggestions and Souvenir Spoons.

J. H. JOHNSTON & CO.,

17 Union Square, New York.

Diamonds, Jewelry, Watches, Silverware.

## ★ HOLIDAY GOODS. ★

Diamonds and Watches

A SPECIALTY.

Importers and Manufacturers.

WATCHES, DIAMONDS, CHAINS,

RICH JEWELRY

AND SILVERWARE.

"THE BENEDICT" is our patent Sleeve and Collar Button. Strong, durable and easy to adjust. In Gold or Silver.

BENEDICT BROTHERS,

KEEPERS OF THE CITY TIME,

BENEDICT BUILDING,

171 BROADWAY,

COR. CORTLANDT ST., NEW YORK.

ESTABLISHED 1821.

★ BENEDICT'S TIME. ★

## THE NEW NECK-BOA,

with head and claws in perfect representation of the animal, in all leading fashionable furs.

Genuine mink, \$5; better grade, \$8, and the handsomest for \$10. Genuine Hudson's Bay sable, good quality, \$10; better for \$15; handsome for \$20; very handsome, \$25; and the darkest and choicest for \$30. These prices are from \$2 to \$5 less than the regular market price on mink, and from \$5 to \$10 on sable boas. All leading styles of sealskin garments and fashionable furs of every description at lowest possible prices for reliable goods. Mail orders promptly filled.

Fashion book mailed free.

C. C. SHAYNE,

Manufacturing Furrier,

124 WEST 42d STREET, N. Y.



## From Cow to Cup—

The nutritious portions of clear, lean beef are transformed by the famous Cudahy process, into the condensed essence of strength.



Rex Brand Cudahy's Extract of Beef

is carefully prepared in 2, 4, 8 and 16 oz. jars—delicious—aromatic—convenient.

Ask your grocer for "Rex Brand"—insist on getting it, too.

The Cudahy Packing Co.,  
SO. OMAHA, NEB.

Write Gorham Mfg. Co., Silversmiths, Broadway & 19th Street, New York, and have them send you without charge the dainty Christmas Shopping List and memorandum-book combined, which they have just published. It suggests hundreds of articles in Solid Silver appropriate for Christmas Gifts.



BOUQUET MAY-BELLS

Made on the flower farms of Grasse, in Southern France. Admitted to be the most delicious perfume ever distilled.

Savon May-Bells

repeats this fragrance in the form of a soap, which from its purity and softness is most beneficial to the complexion.

Wholesale Depot:  
56-58 Murray St.,  
New York.

Samples of either sent on receipt of ten cents.



4711

EAU DE COLOGNE

Undoubtedly the finest and most refreshing perfume. Imported into the United States for over fifty years.

U. S. AGENTS,  
MÜLHENS & KROPFF,  
NEW YORK.



THE CROWN PERFUMERY CO.'S DELICIOUS NEW PERFUME.

CRAB-APPLE BLOSSOMS.

Sold everywhere, in Crown stoppered bottles only.

## Her Christmas Present



SOLD EVERYWHERE  
A thing of beauty that will lighten the burdens of every day in the year. The "Bissell" are perfect.

A New Style BISSELL CARPET SWEEPER

YOU DON'T KNOW  
THE LUXURY OF  
PIPE SMOKING  
UNTIL YOU HAVE TRIED  
**YALE MIXTURE**  
SMOKING TOBACCO.  
MADE BY MARBURG BROS.

## GREAT WESTERN

THE FINEST CHAMPAGNE

IN AMERICA.

A home product which Americans are especially proud of.

One that reflects the highest credit on the country which produces it.

Now used in many of the best Hotels, Clubs, and Homes in preference to foreign vintages.

For particulars, Prices, etc., Address

Pleasant Valley Wine Co.

RHEIMS.

Steuben Co., New York.



## 'The Belle of Nelson.'



An elegant HAND-MADE whisky, distilled in the mountains of Kentucky, for gentlemen as a beverage, or a restorative for brain-workers and nervous debility.

We bottle our oldest stock, distilled in 1875, put in cases containing 12 bottles, at \$15 per case; or can supply it by the barrel, 5 to 15 years old, at \$4 to \$7.50 per gallon. Established in 1843. We refer to the Governor of Kentucky and all Louisville Banking Institutions. The absolute purity of the Belle of Nelson is guaranteed. Address

Belle of Nelson Distillery Co.,

LOUISVILLE, KY.

This whisky can be had of H. B. Kirk & Co., 69 Fulton Street; Acker, Merrill & Condit; Lemcke & Doscher, 204 Fulton Street; John Leffer & Co., 47 Vesey Street; or M. Hahn & Co., 125 Water Street, New York, and from New Orleans and San Francisco depots; or, if preferred, direct from distillery.

## Blair's Film

It is the only one!

doesn't disappoint the user.

Don't think, if your season's work has been an utter failure on account of the misrepresentation of certain specialty Camera manufacturers, that the whole Snap Shot Camera business is a fraud. Thousands of users of Hawkeyes with Roll Holders (Hand and Folding) and Kamarets will tell you that Blair's Film has uniformly given good results.

Blair's Film is made by an entirely new and original method, and in addition to its uniformity it is safe for all seasons as it will not frill.

Don't be deceived by any further attempts to sell you other than the Blair's Film. Let the failures of others cause you always to insist that your Roll Holder, Kamaret or Kodak be reloaded with Blair's Film. If any dealer says this can't be done, tell him you can attend to it, and write us or send your instrument (whatever it is) to any of our offices and we will at once reload and return.

As makers of Cameras for Amateurs and the Trade since 1880, and the largest Camera manufacturers in the world, we not only know what is wanted, but test every specialty before placing it on the market. Catalogue of our specialties, including new style of Folding Hawkeye (combining every qualification of the professional Camera with compactness), sent for stamp.

THE BLAIR CAMERA COMPANY, Manufacturers. Main Office—471 Tremont St., Boston. Branches—451-453 Broadway, New York; 918 Arch St., Philadelphia; 245-247 State St., Chicago. Factories—Boston, Pawtucket, Greenpoint and Brooklyn. E. & H. T. ANTHONY & CO., New York Trade Agents.

Frank Leslie's Weekly IS the Leading Illustrated Paper of America.



## AN ENVIABLE RECORD.

The record of the Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association is unique in the history of life insurance, and one of which its officials may well feel proud. Commencing in 1881 without any capital, it has now a surplus reserve fund exceeding \$3,800,000, and a yearly premium income of more than \$4,000,000; it has paid upward of \$14,500,000 in death claims, written nearly \$400,000,000 of insurances, and established successful agencies in nearly every healthy country in the world. We learn from the published statements of the association that its new business for 1891 exceeds \$50,000,000, being over \$10,000,000 in excess of the business written in 1890. The new business to November 1st, 1892, exceeds \$45,000,000. As will be seen from an advertisement on another page, the Mutual Reserve has already saved its members over \$30,000,000 in reduction of premiums, the cost of a \$30,000 policy being about the same as the rate charged for a \$10,000 policy issued by old-system companies. It is difficult for the ordinary business man to understand how it is possible to furnish life insurance at such low rates, consistent with security. Mr. E. B. Harper, the company's able president, who has just returned from a trip to Europe, must feel highly satisfied to find the accounts in such excellent shape, and the outlook for the future so flattering.

## WHERE QUAIL AND DEER ABOUND.

The best quail shooting may be had in the Shenandoah Valley, Va., and the best deer hunting in the mountains of West Virginia. Both sections are accessible by Baltimore and Ohio express trains from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. For detailed information as to rates, time of trains, etc., write to Charles O. Scull, General Passenger Agent, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, Baltimore, Md.

## PHILLIPS' DIGESTIBLE COCOA

presents a new and valuable food beverage. It is delicious to the taste, highly nutritious, and rendered readily digestible.

RELIABLE under all circumstances is Dr. Bull's Cough Syrup, the people's friend. The earth moves.—Evidence, you can buy a first-class liniment, Salvation Oil, for 25 cents.

SUPERIOR to vaseline and cucumbers. Crème Simon, marvelous for the complexion and light, cutaneous affections; it whitens, perfumes, fortifies the skin. J. Simon, 18 rue Grange Batelière, Paris. Park & Tilford, New York; druggists, perfumers, fancy goods stores.

DR. LESLIE E. KEELEY'S double chloride of gold treatment for drunkenness, drug addiction, and nerve exhaustion can be obtained in New York State only at the Keeley Institutes in White Plains, Binghamton, Canandaigua, Westfield, and Babylon. For terms, address or call at either institute, or at the following offices: 7 East 27th Street, New York City; Room 10, Chapin Block, Buffalo; 32 Larned Building, Syracuse; 125 Ellwanger & Barry Building, Rochester. All communications strictly confidential. Beware of imitations.

## GOOD COOKING

is one of the chief blessings of every home. To always insure good custards, puddings, sauces, etc., use Gail Borden's "Eagle" Brand Condensed Milk. Directions on the label. Sold by your grocer and druggist.

It would be idle to attempt to prove the popularity of the Sohmer Piano. Every child in the United States and Canada knows the Sohmer.

LADIES are greatly benefited by the use of the tonic, Dr. Siebert's Angostura Bitters.

Brown's Household Panacea, "The Great Pain Reliever," for internal and external use; cures cramps, colic, colds; all pain. 25c.

## Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup

has been used for over fifty years by millions of mothers for their children while teething with perfect success. It soothes the child, softens the gums, allays all pain, cures wind colic, and is the best remedy for diarrhoea. Sold by druggists in every part of the world, twenty-five cents a bottle.

When Baby was sick, we gave her Castoria.  
When she was a Child, she cried for Castoria.  
When she became Miss, she clung to Castoria.  
When she had Children, she gave them Castoria.

BEATTY Pianos, Organs, \$33 up. Want ag'ts. Cat. free. Dan'l F. Beatty, Wash'ton, N.Y.

## THE PREMIER CAMERA

THE BEST IN MARKET



PRICE \$18.00

SIMPLE OF MANIPULATION. PLATES OR FILMS ARE USED THE SHUTTER IS ALWAYS SET COVERED WITH LEATHER

Send for Catalogue & copy of Modern Photography  
ROCHESTER OPTICAL COMPANY,  
17 S. Water St. ROCHESTER, N.Y.

## LIKE SUMMER ROSES

PURITY of person COMMANDS OUR RESPECT, and for this reason we seek to avoid PEOPLE OF BAD TASTE, because they are usually uncleanly. But what can be more lovely than a young girl, just budding into womanhood, whose every charm has been heightened by the use of

## Constantine's

## Persian Healing

## Pine Tar Soap?

This indispensable article for Toilet use Frees the Head from Dandruff; prevents the hair from falling off or turning prematurely gray; removes blotches and pimples from the skin; makes the teeth shine like pearls, and gives to the breath a sweetness which is as fascinating as the odor of

## SUMMER ROSES.

Remember this wonderful beautifier is the ORIGINAL PINE TAR SOAP.

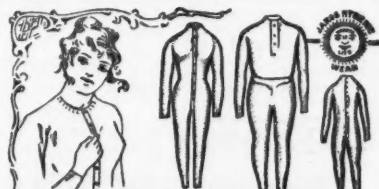
FOR SALE BY DRUGGISTS.

## KRANICH & BACH PIANOS.

Warerooms: 225 and 229 E. 23d St., N.Y. 16 W. 125th St.

Owing to the great demand for these celebrated Pianos, we have erected a very large addition to our factory which will enable us to make 50 Pianos per week.

These Instruments are unexcelled, and are sold AT MODERATE PRICES. Sold on installments and rented.



JAROS HYGIENIC UNDERWEAR  
NON-IRRITATING WOOL FLEECE KNIT PREVENTS CHILLING  
NON-SHRINKABLE  
GUARANTEE CERTIFICATE WITH EACH GARMENT  
FOR MEN WOMEN & CHILDREN  
631 BROADWAY NEW YORK SEND FOR ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE

## THE DORÉ GALLERY.

Entire Collection from London. The rendezvous of the élite of New York, the church, literature and art, the fashionable world. Thousands of Deeply Impressed Visitors. Open week-days 10 to 10. Admission, 50 cents. Thursdays, 10 to 6. CARNEGIE MUSIC HALL, 57th Street and 7th Avenue.

## THE CELEBRATED SOHMER PIANOS

Are at present the Most Popular and Preferred by Leading Artists. Warerooms, 149, 151, 153, 155 East 14th St., N.Y. SOHMER & CO., Chicago, Ill., 236 State St.; San Francisco, Cal., Union Club Building; St. Louis, Mo., 1529 Olive St.; Kansas City, Mo., 1123 Main St.

MAKE HOME ATTRACTIVE WITH A PORTABLE BILLIARD & CROQUET TABLE PRICE \$30 CATALOGUE FREE PARLOR BILLIARD & CROQUET CO. DETROIT, MICH.

## A Lasting Charm

that confers distinction on the possessor, and lends to any home a new attraction; it produces the best works of the world's famous composers with a purity of tone and sympathetic shading not excelled by an accomplished performer. This charm is found in that wonderful new instrument, Paillard's Gloria Interchangeable Music Box.

No strings to get out of order; no needs to rust. It lasts a life-time and plays any selection you choose.

Musical people are carried away with it. Any home may possess it. We have all styles and prices, and make special terms.

Send for book, or come and hear our daily concert when you are in the city.

NOVEL DESIGNS FOR CHILDREN'S GIFTS.

M. J. PAILLARD & CO., 680 B'way, N. Y.

## PRINCESS OF WALES

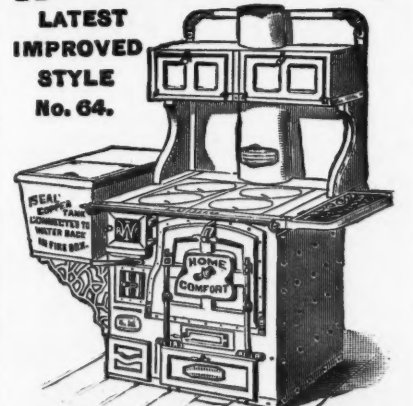


## TOILET REQUISITES.

GOLDEN HAIR WASH for the hair. In bottles, \$1. Prepared and sent upon receipt of price by R. T. BELLCHAMBERS, Importer of Fine Human Hair Goods, 42 West 22d Street, New York.

CRIPPLES, Ladies and girls, or exercise, buy a Fairy Tricycle. Just or hand power BICYCLES. Cheap for all. Address: FAY MFG. CO., Elyria, Ohio.

## HOME COMFORT



STEEL FAMILY RANGE. Made almost WHOLLY of MALLEABLE IRON and WROUGHT STEEL. OVER 230,000 NOW IN ACTUAL USE.

This Range is SOLD ONLY BY OUR TRAVELING SALESMAN from our own wagons throughout the country. WROUGHT IRON RANGE CO., Sole Manufacturers. ST. LOUIS, MO. Established 1864. Paid up Capital \$500,000. Write for Cook Book—issued free.

Piso's Remedy for Catarrh is the Best, Easiest to Use, and Cheapest. CATARRH Sold by druggists or sent by mail, 50c. E. T. Hazeltine, Warren, Pa.

WHIST TRAYS For sale by all leading Stationers. Send for Rules and Price List to IRLING BROS. & EVERARD, Kalamazoo, Mich.

FISCHER PIANOS. Grand, Upright and Square, Moderate Prices. TO RENT, INSTALLMENTS, AND EXCHANGED. 5th Avenue, cor. 16th Street, New York.

# KODAK

## Ordinary.

A New Series of Cheap Kodaks accurately made and capable of doing good work.

Just the Camera for the children.

\$6.00 to \$15.00.

Send for New Catalogue.

EastmanKodak Co. Rochester, N. Y.

## Arnold, Constable & Co. LYONS SILKS.

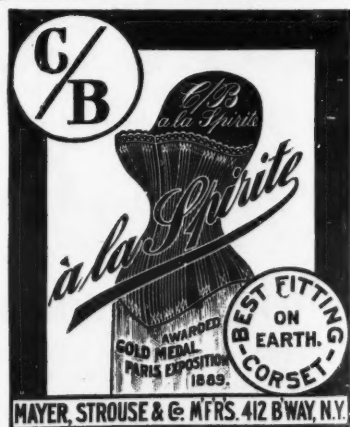
Moire Antique, Figured, Striped and Cameleon Effects; Brocade Satins and Silks; Ombre, Glace and Figured Silks; Striped Silks, Taffetas and Surah Plaids; White Satin, Faille, Moire Antique, Velourine

FOR WEDDING GOWNS.

Grenadine, Gaze and Plisse Crepe FOR EVENING AND BALL DRESSES.

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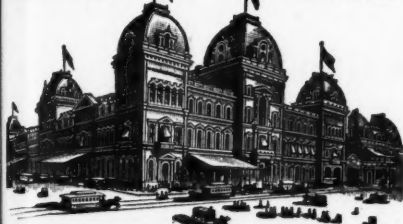
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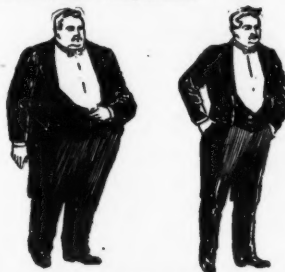
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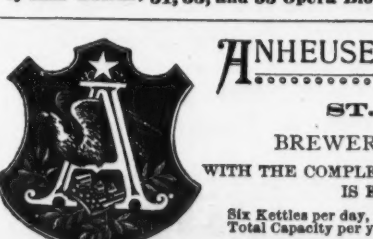
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